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**The Zapatistas and Their World: The Pueblos of Morelos in Post-revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1940**

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**The Zapatistas and Their World: The Pueblos of Morelos in Post-  
revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1940**

**by**

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**Dissertation**

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*To my parents*

The *haciendas* lie abandoned; semi-tropical growth burst from a thousand crannies, wreathing these monuments of a dead past in a wilderness of flowers. Green lizards dart through the deserted chapels. The bells which summoned to toil and to worship are silent. The peons are free. But they are not contented.

-Ernest Gruening on Morelos, *Mexico and its Heritage*, New York: Appleton Century Croft, 1928, 162.

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# **The Zapatistas and Their World: The Pueblos of Morelos in Post-revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1940**

**by**

**Salvador Salinas III, Ph.D.**

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

SUPERVISOR: Matthew Butler

Studies on the state of Morelos and its role in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) have tended to focus on the origins of the conflict or the fighting itself rather than the outcomes of the insurgency led by Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919). This dissertation, instead, analyzes the aftermath of the revolution in Morelos by providing a new political and environmental history of the state in the 1920s and 1930s. It argues that previous conceptualizations of the region's villages as being motivated by either moral or economic factors are by themselves insufficient to explain the diversity of pueblos, or rural communities, in Morelos. Rather, this study uses Mexico's historically-rooted, liberal concept of village sovereignty to integrate moral, economic, and cultural interpretations of village behaviors in post-revolutionary Morelos. The idea of what it meant to be a sovereign village, however, evolved in the 1920s and 1930s to include new political and institutional ties to centralized government in Mexico City. Rural engagement with the post-revolutionary state in fact strengthened local control over elections, natural resources, and primary schools vis-à-vis old elites now in retreat during



this period. Villagers, meanwhile, constantly dialogued with national authorities over the aims of federal state-building policies and negotiated the terms of the region's loyalty to Mexico City.

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## **Introduction: Reinterpreting the Role of the Pueblos of Morelos in Post-revolutionary Mexican History**

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) devastated the villages, or pueblos, of Morelos—a small state south of Mexico City. Almost ten years of warfare reduced the population of the state by two fifths from almost 180,000 residents in 1910 to just 103,000 people a decade later. As one observer described the state of affairs in Morelos in 1920:

its inhabitants, who emigrated to other states in the country during the last decade, have not all returned to their homes. There is no sugar production; work that was once a source of wealth for mill workers, no longer exists. Urban property is mostly destroyed. Government offices are disorganized...education establishments have no defined curriculum and lack supplies...schools buildings have even deteriorated. Commerce...is reduced to a bare minimum.<sup>1</sup>

With the end of fighting in 1920, however, there began a transition to a period of relative peace, allowing the state's inhabitants to resettle the countryside and rebuild their villages. As Tetelcingo's inhabitants remembered it, the hour had arrived for "the new work of reconstruction."<sup>2</sup> The pueblos, in other words, would reconstitute themselves; yet in many respects the post-revolutionary world looked much different from that of the pre-revolutionary past. Indeed, the idea of what it *meant* to be a pueblo would change as the region's agrarian communities established themselves anew and participated in the construction of the post-revolutionary state over the course of the 1920s and 1930s.

The villages of Morelos have received a particular amount of attention from academics within Mexico and abroad.<sup>3</sup> This is largely because Morelos was home to the

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<sup>1</sup> AGN, Particulares, Genovevo de la O, caja 24, exp. 1, f. 31, Dr. Manuel Mazari to De la O, 3 June 1920.

<sup>2</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tetelcingo (Cuautla), exp. 23/2980, f.4, Refugio Rodríguez to José Parres, 12 October 1920.

<sup>3</sup> Notable early studies for Morelos include Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlán, a Mexican Village; a Study of Folk Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1951); Eric R. Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1957): 1-18.

*zapatista* revolt, the iconic revolutionary movement for “land and liberty” led by Emiliano Zapata in the 1910s, which today still stands as a national symbol of social justice.<sup>4</sup> For the same reason, Morelos has proved fruitful ground for scholars seeking to explain the nature and behavior of rural communities; why they do or do not rebel; and how villages operate internally and with the outside world. For all that historians have studied the origins of the *zapatista* uprising and the subsequent insurgency of 1911-1920, however, the outcomes of the local revolution in the 1920s and 1930s—the topic and period of this dissertation—have received significantly less attention. Traditionally, authors have also tended to conceptualize Morelos’s rural communities by arguing that their behavior was driven by either moral or economic impulses.<sup>5</sup> This did not change much even in the 1990s, when research on Mexican rural communities began to emphasize “popular culture” as the terrain whereby popular actors and the architects of the Mexican national state “negotiated” a post-revolutionary consensus.<sup>6</sup> Yet as this dissertation demonstrates, these previous analytical frameworks by themselves are insufficient to understand Morelos’s integration into the post-revolutionary state.

This study takes the irresolvable tension between economic and moral interpretations of village behaviors as a starting point for analysis of the diversity and

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<sup>4</sup> Samuel Brink, *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata: Myth, Memory, and Mexico’s Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); John Womack, Jr., ed., *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader* (New York: New Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> While the present study contains its hypothesis specifically to Morelos, the debate on the nature of rural communities includes studies of village life in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For two classic works on Southeast Asia, see James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). For a more recent treatment of the subject involving rural rebellion and the closed corporate community model in Latin America, see Jim Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside: Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> The seminal volume of this scholarship is G. M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

nuances of the Mexican countryside. I argue that between the violent period of village decomposition in the 1910s and the revival of rural society in the 1920s and 1930s, the idea what it meant to be “a pueblo” evolved to include new political and institutional ties to centralized government in Mexico City. The revolutionary war shattered rural solidarity and at the forefront of the reconstruction process reemerged Mexico’s historically-rooted, liberal concept of village sovereignty. Yet unlike in the past, village sovereignty could now be negotiated more effectively with Mexico City through a plethora of new institutions and even buttressed by ties to the federal government. In order to begin exploring the pueblos’ evolution, this introductory chapter does four things: it first reviews the literature on post-revolutionary Morelos; secondly, it elaborates on the concept of village sovereignty; thirdly, it presents the dissertation’s research findings; and finally, it concludes with a note on sources.

### ***Historiography***

The literature on the *zapatista* revolt is as old as the peace in Morelos,<sup>7</sup> yet most works within this large historiography essentialize the pueblos rather than historicize them in nuanced, complex shades. Initial portrayals by urbanites and the Mexico City press imagined Zapata and his country followers as a savage country horde set on destroying

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<sup>7</sup> For three historiographical essays on Morelos and *zapatismo*, see Felipe Ávila Espinosa, “La historiografía del zapatismo después de John Womack,” in *Estudios sobre el zapatismo*, ed. Laura Espejel López (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2000); Felipe Ávila Espinosa, “La historiografía del zapatismo,” in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 7: *Tierra, gente, tiempos del sur*, ed. Felipe Ávila Espinosa, (Cuernavaca: H. Congreso del Estado de Morelos, 2010); Brígida von Mentz, “Miradas recientes sobre las tierras de Zapata. Notas historiográficas sobre el estado de Morelos,” in *Historiografía regional de México. Siglo XX*, eds. José Mario Contreras Valdez, Pedro Luna Jiménez, and Pablo Serrano Álvarez (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 2009). See also the essays in María Herrerías Guerra, ed., *Construcciones de género en la historiografía zapatista (1911-1919)* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de las Mujeres de la Equidad de Género, 2010). More broadly, for bibliographic commentaries on Morelos history, see Domingo Díez, *Bibliografía del Estado de Morelos* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1933) and Lorena Careaga Viliesid, *Morelos, bibliografía comentada* (Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 1990).

civilization itself. Zapata became known infamously as the “Attila of the South,” implying a personalist, barbarian struggle. Later accounts by veterans of the war and the personal associates of Zapata established the positive qualities of rural Morelos. Among the most influential early works are accounts by Zapata’s former secretaries and ideologues: Gildardo Magaña, who, before his death in 1939, had published three of five volumes entitled *Emiliano Zapata y el agrarismo en México*; and Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, who wrote extensively in newspapers and taught at the national university after serving in the Chamber of Deputies in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> Both of these authors extolled the virtues of their former chief and martyred leader. Each looked to the ancient and colonial past to trace the roots of discontent in the countryside, and each offered romantic portraits of the pueblos. Soto y Gama’s and Magaña’s villages were indigenous, autonomous, egalitarian, homogenous, and timeless, if encroached upon by expanding sugar estates since the sixteenth century.

At the national university, moreover, Soto y Gama taught Jesús Sotelo Inclán, author of the classic *Raíz y razón de Zapata* published in 1943. Sotelo Inclán was the first to gain access to the historical documents of Zapata’s home village and narrate the agrarian struggles of Anenecuilco through the centuries, providing both the historical background and ideological justification for the 1911 rebellion. It was also Sotelo Inclán who first traced the essence of the pueblo back to the pre-Hispanic *calpulli*—a village institution that distributed communal lands worked by the families of the agrarian settlement. The *calpulli*, wrote Sotelo Inclán, was “effectively a human group, united by

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<sup>8</sup> Gildardo Magaña and Carlos Pérez Guerrero, *Emiliano Zapata y el agrarismo en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Ruta, 1951). For a collection of Soto y Gama’s newspaper writings, see Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, *El pensamiento de Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama a través de 50 años de labor periodística, 1899-1949*, ed. Román Iglesias González (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997). By the early 1940s, Soto y Gama had also penned a general history of agrarianism in Mexico that was lost until recently. See Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, *Historia del agrarismo en México*, ed. Pedro Castro (Mexico City: Era, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2002).

blood and kinship.”<sup>9</sup> This notion of the pueblo as a tight-knit family unit became the cornerstone of a closed and communitarian vision of *zapatismo*. *Raíz y razón de Zapata* places the pueblo at the center of a long defensive struggle for its land with Anenecuilco taken as the exemplary village of Morelos. The “root and reason” of Zapata are the community itself and the surrounding lands that sustain the community’s livelihood. As in Magaña’s and Soto y Gama’s portrayals, the pueblo is portrayed as being internally cohesive, besieged before the revolution by land-hungry sugar planters.<sup>10</sup>

Post-revolutionary anthropologists also contributed to the study of Morelos. The village of Tepoztlán, in particular, located at the base of the Ajusco Mountains, welcomed two distinguished twentieth-century anthropologists, Robert Redfield and Oscar Lewis. Redfield lived and studied in Tepoztlán in 1926-1927, while Lewis studied the village in 1943-1944 and 1947 with a large research team. After their respective field studies, Redfield and Lewis engaged in a classic debate concerning the nature of peasant communities that has shaped scholars’ understanding of the rural world. Like Soto y Gama and Sotelo Inclán, Redfield’s book, *Tepoztlan*, stressed communal solidarity and the cycle of religious and agricultural rituals that bound the surrounding hamlets to the municipal seat of Tepoztlán.<sup>11</sup> Lewis, instead, focused on the political economy of Tepoztlán and found internal divisions, factionalism, and struggles over power and wealth rife in the village.<sup>12</sup> Lewis also criticized Redfield for neglecting poverty and the

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<sup>9</sup> Jesús Sotelo Inclán, *Raíz y razón de Zapata, Anenecuilco*, second edition (Mexico City: Editorial CFE, 1943/1970), 25.

<sup>10</sup> John Steinbeck’s screenplay *Viva Zapata!* and the subsequent film directed by Elia Kaza in 1952 represent the English counterparts to these foundational works chronicling the history of *zapatismo* in Morelos. John Steinbeck, *Zapata*, ed. Robert Eustis Morsberger (New York: Penguin Books, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlan*.

<sup>12</sup> Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*. Lewis also published oral histories of a family in Tepoztlán. See Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sánchez, Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (New York: Random House, 1961); Oscar Lewis, *Pedro Martínez: A Mexican Peasant and His Family* (New York: Random House, 1964).



darker aspects of life in the pueblo. In his later book, *The Little Community*, Redfield responded to Lewis by accepting some of the criticisms, noting that anthropological methodology had evolved in the years between their monographs. He believed the different cultural and personal values of the investigators also explained the academic breach. Redfield's defense was most eloquent when he concluded that "the hidden question behind my book is, 'What do these people enjoy?'" The hidden question behind Dr. Lewis's book is, 'What do these people suffer from?'"<sup>13</sup> Redfield's positive notion of "folk society," we might add, was reprised in an influential article by Eric Wolf in 1957, albeit one later critiqued widely in anthropology, history, and the social sciences. Wolf argued that villages in Mesoamerica (including Morelos) are "closed corporate peasant communities" where membership is exclusive to those born and raised in the rural settlement. The pueblo as a whole controls surrounding lands and redistributes surplus wealth to public works and religious festivities. Although criticized today for being too rigid and isolated, Wolf's concept of the closed corporate community steered the author of probably the most famous book on Morelos.<sup>14</sup>

John Womack Jr.'s *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* stands not just among the most widely read and cited works on modern Morelos, but on Mexico.<sup>15</sup> With its pithy

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Redfield, *The Little Community, and Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 136. For an article that analyzes the different interpretations between Redfield and Lewis, see Phillip K. Bock, "Tepoztlán Reconsidered," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 6, no. 1 (1980): 129–150.

<sup>14</sup> Eric R. Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1957): 1-18. Twenty-nine years later, in light of the research that he inspired, Wolf revisited his notion of closed corporate communities and noted that "the overly generalized interpretations of the mid-1950s need to be qualified by very much variation both in geographical space in historical time." Eric R. Wolf, "The Vicissitudes of the Closed Corporate Peasant Community," *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 2 (1986): 326. See also the discussion of Morelos in chapter one in Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969).

<sup>15</sup> One appraisal noted that within a year "journalists, literary critics, and professional reviewers in a wide variety of magazines, newspapers, and nonhistorical reviews have received the book well." Michael C. Meyer, "Review of *Zapata and Mexican Revolution* by John Womack Jr.," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 49, no. 4 (1969): 775.

insights and colloquial writing, its use of narrative rather than academic analysis, it ably recounts the life and times of Emiliano Zapata. At the heart of the study lie the selfless Zapata and equally selfless agrarian communities of the fertile valleys of Cuernavaca and Cuautla de Amilpas. In many ways, Womack's *Zapata* begins where Sotelo Inclán's *Raíz y razón de Zapata* left off—at the outbreak of the violence. The prologue, "The People Choose a Leader," cites Sotelo Inclán and recounts the evening of 12 September 1909, when Anenecuilco's elders gathered to elect the then thirty-year-old Zapata as the new village chief in charge of defending the pueblo's land and water titles in court. The rural folk of Morelos, Womack argues, subsequently rose up to uphold this way of life and to recover control of their town councils, lands, waters, and forests resources.

Like Sotelo Inclán, Womack portrays local rural life as cohesive, holistic, and unified: villages existed as bastions of rural tradition in the face of the expanding haciendas and hated municipal authorities imposed by the Porfirian political machine. The book's narrative emphasis also accounts for its strengths and weaknesses. Womack, although influenced by Wolf, Redfield, and Lewis, was not interested in grappling analytically with the diversity of pueblos. Rather, he was recounting a rural epic and, as in Sotelo Inclán's study, the story of Anenecuilco and the collective experience of the villages are writ large over Morelos.<sup>16</sup> Precisely because it lacks analysis, the most

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<sup>16</sup> Readers, especially in Mexico, found a conservative strain in the revolutionary movement. A review in *Historian* interpreted Womack's characterization of the peasantry as people who "did not want 'reform' of the agrarian system, only a return to their traditional forms of land ownership before the advent of Porfirio Díaz." Frank Jellinek, "Review of *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* by John Womack," *The New York Times* (New York, February 2, 1969). Another review in the *New York Times* modestly opined that "it may be that Mr. Womack overstates the Zapatistas' conservatism." Oakah Jones, "Review of *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* by John Womack," *Historian* 32, no. 2 (1970): 32. Recent criticism, though still rare, has been more poignant. William Schell takes aim at Womack's portrayal of Zapata in the transformation from village leader to regional revolutionary by arguing that John Steinbeck and Elia Kazan's 1952 film, *!Viva Zapata!*, became the underlying source to interpret Zapata's Porfirian background. Steinbeck had encountered more myth than reality surrounding Zapata's personal history and ultimately produced a cinematic rendering of the official myth of the caudillo. William Schell Jr., "Emiliano Zapata and the Old Regime: Myth, Memory, and Method," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 25, no. 2 (2009): 327–365. I

famous book on Morelos does not fully penetrate the diversity of the countryside or the multifaceted nature of *zapatismo* and makes some normative assumptions about pueblo life.<sup>17</sup> Morelos villagers, in Womack's view, were not too different from the insurgent Cuban and Vietnamese peasantries of the early and mid-1960s, then fighting national wars of liberation. In similarly heroic fashion, Womack provides a chapter on the outcomes of the revolution and ends with a very populist conclusion:

So ended the year 1920, in peace, with populist agrarian reform instituted as a national policy, and with the Zapatista movement established in Morelos politics. In the future through thick and thin these achievements would last. This was the claim Zapata, his chiefs, and their volunteers had forced, and [Gildardo] Magaña had won and secured.<sup>18</sup>

The post-revolutionary period is deemed a natural outcome of 1910–1919, with the *zapatistas* “inheriting” the state and local governments. Combatants and migrants return to their pueblos to work the lands they have taken by conquest; subsequently village virtues become institutionalized in the land reform. In the larger scheme of Mexican politics and history, of course, Womack's classic work also inserted Emiliano Zapata into the orthodox agrarian interpretation of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>19</sup> For a long time, no

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would argue that Sotelo Inclán's *Raíz y razón de Zapata*, rather than Steinbeck's film, was Womack's main source to interpret Zapata's Porfirian background. See also Patrick J. McNamara, “Rewriting Zapata: Generational Conflict on the Eve of the Mexican Revolution,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 30, no. 1 (2014): 122–149.

<sup>17</sup> Womack later recalled that at the time of the writing, “I was well aware you could have different villages...even next door they could be different.” Personal communication with the author, 12 June 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Womack, *Zapata*, 369.

<sup>19</sup> The traditional view, first espoused by the war's veterans and quickly adopted by the national government, stresses the popular and above all agrarian character of the uprising that swept away the oppressive system of the dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911). Workers and peasants united to defeat the old regime, culminating in the formation of a revolutionary state that delivered the goods of land and labor reform. The peasants of Morelos became iconic Mexican country people in this process. Several influential works on the Mexican Revolution include Frank Tannenbaum, *The Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1930); Eyley N. Simpson, *The Ejido: Mexico's Way Out* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 1937); Jesús Silva Herzog, *El agrarismo mexicano y la reforma agraria: Exposición y crítica* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1959). For the sources of Tannenbaum's thinking, see Charles A. Hale, “Frank Tannenbaum and the Mexican Revolution,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (1995): 215–246.

historian ventured into the archives to reappraise Womack's Zapata as Lewis had done with Redfield's Tepoztlán. If anything, Morelos served as a yardstick for the study of other regions, rather than an object of historical study. Womack's definitive archival account essentially ended the first generation of studies on revolutionary Morelos. In the end, however, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* is a story about how the pueblos sustained an insurgency for nearly a decade, not a deep look at the internal conflicts and contradictions within a movement, and still less an account of how that insurgency translated into the post-revolutionary context.

If historians shied away from Morelos, anthropologists certainly did not. In the 1970s, Arturo Warman led a team of anthropologists to eastern Morelos to study peasant communities in Villa de Ayala, Hueyapan, Tepalcingo, Zacualpan, San Gabriel Amacuitapilco, and Jaloxtoc. The group of investigators used oral history techniques, corroborated using documents and books, to uncover the historical memories of the communities. Their research produced several published accounts, which included Warman's *We Come to Object: The Peasants of Morelos and the Nation State*.<sup>20</sup> Warman's students, meanwhile, compiled essays into three complementary volumes entitled *Los campesinos de la tierra de Zapata*.<sup>21</sup>

In many respects, *We Come to Object* represents a classically revisionist but local interpretation of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>22</sup> Warman dedicated a lengthy chapter to local

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<sup>20</sup> Arturo Warman, *"We Come to Object": The Peasants of Morelos and the National State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

<sup>21</sup> Sinecio López Méndez, Laura Helguera Reséndiz, and Ramón Ramírez Melgarejo, *Los campesinos de la tierra de Zapata*, vol. 1: *Adaptación, cambio y rebelión* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1974); Alfonso Corcuera Garza, Jorge Alonso, and Roberto Melville, *Los campesinos de la tierra de Zapata*, vol. 2: *Subsistencia y explotación* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1974); Elena Azaola Garrido and Esteban Krotz, *Los campesinos de la tierra de Zapata*, vol. 3: *Política y conflicto* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1976).

<sup>22</sup> A new generation of scholars, in the wake of the 1968 government massacre in Tlatelolco of protesting middle-class students, questioned the origins, popularity, and outcomes of the Mexican Revolution.

aspects of land distribution in post-revolutionary Morelos. His more expansive analysis of the 1920s and 1930s differed sharply from Womack's outcomes of the revolution. Central to Warman's thesis is the strength and cooptative power of the federal government vis-à-vis the pueblos.

Agrarian reform was not going to legitimize the historic right of the villages to the land nor strengthen their autonomy; it was not going to carry out acts of justice... On the contrary, it was going to distribute the land as a unilateral concession from the State, like a powerful figure who retains for himself the right to watch over the fulfillment of his supreme edict and to intervene overtly in its administration to a create a political clientele.<sup>23</sup>

The federal regime, through land reform, manipulated the peasantry for its own political and capitalistic ends, while village autonomy weakened at the expense of the centralized government. Political elites, in other words, betrayed and co-opted *zapatismo*. Yet for all of Warman's sweeping generalizations condemning the entire state, his study arguably focused on an atypical group of seven eastern villages; his state-centered interpretation also suppresses any notion of peasant agency written as it was at the height of scholarly disenchantment with the Mexican revolutionary state.

Additional works by anthropologist in the 1970s and 1980s created a second generation of studies on Morelos, but each generally fell within either of these traditional

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Historians found plenty of evidence across Mexico to demonstrate that the revolution had failed to establish democracy and economic well-being in the countryside. Instead, political bossism (*caciquismo*) and electoral fraud permeated society, and a strong post-revolutionary state emerged in the 1920s and 1930s to impose its will on rural Mexico. For works dealing with the revisionist genre of the Mexican Revolution, see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990) and "Revisionism and Revolution: Mexico Compared to England and France," *Past & Present*, no. 134 (1992): 159–199; Barry Carr, "Recent Regional Studies of the Mexican Revolution," *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 1 (1980): 3–14; Romana Falcón, "El revisionismo revisado," *Estudios Sociológicos*, no. 14 (1987): 341–351; Paul J. Vanderwood, "Review: Building Blocks but Yet No Building: Regional History and the Mexican Revolution," *Mexican Studies* 3, no. 2 (1987): 421–432; Heather Fowler-Salamini, "The Boom in Regional Studies of the Mexican Revolution: Where Is It Leading?," *Latin American Research Review* 28, no. 2 (1993): 175–190; Álvaro Matute, "Orígenes del revisionismo historiográfico de la revolución mexicana," *Signos Histórico*, no. 3 (June 2000): 29–48.

<sup>23</sup> Warman, *We Come to Object*, 136.

(Redfield, Womack) or revisionist (Lewis, Warman) interpretations on the nature of the region's pueblos. Guillermo de la Peña, for example, studied four municipalities in the northern highlands of Morelos in the 1970s and centered his analysis on outside economic and political forces and their impacts on villages. Like Warman, he argued that government representatives controlled reform, not landless peasants.<sup>24</sup> Judith Friedlander also emphasized the importance of external actors in the northeastern village of Hueyapan, in which, she argued, the colonial *cargo* system that integrated Indians into a Catholic society was effortlessly secularized to serve a strong national state.<sup>25</sup>

Since the 1990s and 2000s, a third wave of scholarship on Morelos produced by historians returning to the archives has emerged. These recent works investigate new time periods and topics such as politics, water, and social movements and offer a breadth of analytical lenses to view the countryside. In 1995, Samuel Brunk produced the first English-language account of the local revolution since Womack thirty years before.<sup>26</sup> While corroborating many of Womack's findings, Brunk, however, goes beyond the narrative of a rural epic by providing a more detailed political biography of Zapata. Brunk finds a heterogeneous movement characterized by internal divisions between generals, peasant leaders, and civilian ideologues.<sup>27</sup> Brunk's scholarship, thus, illuminates the diversity of the countryside and decentralizes the military component of

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<sup>24</sup> Guillermo de la Peña, *A Legacy of Promises: Agriculture, Politics, and Ritual in the Morelos Highlands of Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 77.

<sup>25</sup> Judith Friedlander, "The Secularization of the Cargo System: An Example from Postrevolutionary Central Mexico," *Latin American Research Review* 16, no. 2 (1981): 132–143. See also, Judith Friedlander, *Being Indian in Hueyapan*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1975/2006).

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata: Revolution & Betrayal in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). For two recent works in Spanish that explore the *zapatista* revolt, see Francisco Pineda Gómez, *La irrupción zapatista. 1911* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1997) on the military component of the movement and Felipe Arturo Ávila Espinosa, *Los orígenes del zapatismo* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 2001) on why so many villagers from Morelos joined and then abandoned Francisco Madero in 1911.

<sup>27</sup> See also Samuel Brunk, "'The Sad Situation of Civilians and Soldiers': The Banditry of Zapatismo in the Mexican Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (1996): 331–353.

*zapatismo*, but it stops with Zapata's assassination in 1919. Edgar Rojano's *Las cenizas del zapatismo* complements the above study by covering state politics from the years 1919 to 1924, revealing how villages sought to engage the state in a new political context.<sup>28</sup> To contrast these recent treatments of Morelos politics, *Cuando el agua se esfumó* by Laura Valladares studies Morelos's hydraulic system from 1880 to 1940 and shows how water disputes in the *ejido* generated political conflict. Valladares goes beyond an emphasis on land and demonstrates the importance of water in Morelos's agrarian struggle, in the process providing a more holistic and environmental reading of the *zapatista* revolution.<sup>29</sup>

Surprisingly, only one work in the literature on Morelos in the past twenty-five years employs a cultural history approach, which has marked the study of the Mexican Revolution since the 1990s. More recent studies of the revolution emphasize the negotiated settlement between elite and popular actors, whereby the cultural values of rural folks influenced state formation through daily dialogue and interactions with government officials and institutions.<sup>30</sup> This process of negotiation, it is argued, forged a "hegemonic consensus" between rulers and ruled around 1940. Anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz-Adler's *Exits from the Labyrinth* finds that the revolution weakened central authority and gave villagers greater control of local institutions. He cites Redfield's finding of an elaborate popular religious culture in the countryside and articulates the

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<sup>28</sup> Edgar Damián Rojano García, *Las cenizas de zapatismo* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Laura R. Valladares de la Cruz, *Cuando el agua se esfumó: Cambios y continuidades en los usos sociales del agua en Morelos, 1880-1940* (Mexico City: UNAM, Facultad de Estudios Superiores Cuautitlán, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Mary Kay Vaughan, "Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics in the Mexican Revolution," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (1999): 269–305; Eric Van Young, "Review: Making Leviathan Sneeze: Recent Works on Mexico and the Mexican Revolution," *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 3 (1999): 143–165; Alan Knight, "Subalterns, Signifiers, and Statistics: Perspectives on Mexican Historiography," *Latin American Research Review* 37, no. 2 (2002): 136–158; Luis Barrón, *Historias de la revolución mexicana* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económico, 2004).

importance of a localist community ideology based on kinship, inheritance, reciprocity, and justice. Lomnitz-Adler, however, overemphasizes the closure of Morelos's pueblos during the post-revolutionary period.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, in many respects, the case of Morelos in the 1920s and 1930s supports the cultural thesis. The national state was weaker in the countryside than revisionist historians such as Warman have asserted, but that certainly did not translate into a peasant utopia. Yet while it is clear that Mexicans negotiated rule with a new set of elites in the 1920s and 1930s, the bases of that negotiation subsumed in the cultural argument are not always clear.

This dissertation, rather, shows that Mexico City and rural Morelos negotiated the revolutionary settlement precisely over questions regarding the rights and powers of town councils, village agrarian committees, local primary schools, and pueblo religious institutions. Equally as important for this study, the villages of Morelos were a diverse group of communities with varied behaviors. But the question should not be only if the pueblos were opened or closed, but rather which villages displayed which characteristics and why? How did this shape their role in making the post-revolutionary state? Life in rural Mexico was by no means uniform, even in a small state such as Morelos. This dissertation, therefore, integrates cultural, material, and environmental approaches to the study of rural Morelos in order to retool interpretations of the outcomes of the Mexican Revolution. By doing so, it offers a fresh political history of the post-revolution years and sheds new light on the environmental component of the agrarian reform.

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<sup>31</sup> Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). The author has also written a book on Tepoztlán and surveyed the anthological field work conducted in Morelos. See Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Evolución de una sociedad rural* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982) and Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, "La antropología de campo en Morelos, 1930-1983," in *Morelos: Cinco siglos de historia general*, ed. Horacio Crespo (Cuernavaca: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, 1984).



### ***The Idea of the Sovereign Pueblo and its Antecedents***

The concept of village sovereignty was rooted in Morelos's liberal past. During the War of Independence (1810-1821) and for much of the nineteenth century, the ideal of the self-governing rural community dominated the Mexican political landscape.<sup>32</sup> Particularly important to this development was the 1812 Constitution of Cádiz, which called for the abolition of the *repúblicas de indios* and legal ethnic distinctions. The Constitution promised to treat all political subjects as equal citizens, with universal male suffrage, representative government, and indirect elections characterizing the new democratic system. *Repúblicas* with at least one thousand inhabitants became *ayuntamientos constitucionales*. These new governments oversaw annual elections to choose local authorities, administered the community's natural resources, and provided local police services. Now the locus of political rights, the town councils cut across ethnic lines and formed the basis of the electoral system, while civic militias formed in the pueblos to defend the *ayuntamientos* with arms. But rather than having a positive effect on local democracy, in Morelos, the rupture of the old order primarily strengthened the hand of *hacendados* at the expense of pueblo political representation. Sugar production increased during the first half of the nineteenth century, as estate owners replaced the Church as the region's principal landlords. Hacienda owners often controlled local elections by mobilizing estate workers to vote on their behalf, thereby giving them, or their relatives or subordinates, power in municipal offices. This process,

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<sup>32</sup> Antonio Annino, "The Two-Faced Janus: The Pueblos and the Origins of Mexican Liberalism," in *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico*, eds. Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina, and John Tutino (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Antonio Annino, "Soberanías en lucha," in *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica siglo XIX*, eds. Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003); Peter F. Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

in turn, facilitated the despoilment of pueblo lands at the hands of expanding sugar haciendas.<sup>33</sup>

For these reasons, the struggle for local autonomy in Morelos continued in the mid-1850s. The civil wars of the period, the French invasion of Mexico, and the Liberal reform movement led by Benito Juárez offered rural inhabitants new opportunities in regional and national politics. In fact, the rustic individuals who flocked to the Liberal armies constructed their own visions of citizenship and liberty, stressing equality, expansion of the electorate, communal responsibility, and an inclusive nation-state blind to class and ethnicity. This widespread experience of joining the locally commanded National Guard led to a shared experience of citizens in arms. In Morelos, the key principal of popular liberalism remained municipal freedom—the notion of the *municipio libre*. Local autonomy was indeed one of the most persistent tenets of village ideology during the tumultuous period from the 1810s to 1860s.<sup>34</sup> As a result of their support for the liberal cause, rural communities were rewarded with a significant measure of local autonomy; after the Liberal armies triumphed over their French and conservative foes, in 1868 Morelos became an official state carved out Estado de México.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Jaime Irving Reynoso, *Las dulzuras de la libertad. Ayuntamientos y milicias durante el primer liberalismo. Distrito de Cuernavaca, 1810-1835* (Mexico City: Nostromo Ediciones, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Catherine Héau, “La tradición autonomista y legalista de los pueblos en territorio zapatista,” in *Estudios sobre el zapatismo*, ed. Laura Espejel López (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2000), 126.

<sup>35</sup> Numerous works document the political and social history of rural Morelos and the development of municipal politics in the nineteenth-century. In addition to the above studies, see Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Alicia Hernández Chávez, *La tradición republicana del buen gobierno*, (México: El Colegio de México, 1993); Brígida von Mentz, *Pueblos de indios, mulatos y mestizos, 1770-1870: Los campesinos y las transformaciones protoindustriales en el poniente de Morelos* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1988); Paul Hart, *Bitter Harvest: The Social Transformation of Morelos, Mexico, and the Origins of the Zapatista Revolution, 1840-1910* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

The post-revolutionary villagers of Morelos inherited this legacy of liberalism, only exercise of village rights evolved during the 1920s and 1930s to include new political and institutional ties to a more interventionist government in Mexico City.<sup>36</sup> To be a sovereign pueblo in post-revolutionary Morelos meant to sacrifice a measure of municipal autonomy in exchange for federal leverage. A sovereign village, for example, possessed local offices for national political parties, a land grant signed by the president of Mexico, and a federal primary school. Communities utilized these national projects specifically to serve local ends. For instance, federal primary schools fostered rural reconstruction, while ejidal assemblies provided local *agraristas* with a nationally-sanctioned forum to defend natural resources against abusive state and local politicians. The concept of the sovereign pueblo, in other words, was somewhat federalized during the period. Indeed, village discord most often involved state-level politicians and local elites—caciques, municipal authorities, village merchants, proprietary smallholders, *hacendados*—rather than the federal government. For this reason, the national regime became an ally of the *morelense* countryside, which villagers used as leverage in rural struggles. Put another way, official ties to Mexico City made agrarian communities more sovereign, at least in the 1920s and 1930s. Pueblos, therefore, adapted to the post-revolutionary landscape, articulated their demands before the federal government, and strategically defended their interests in the process.

This type of state formation in post-revolutionary Morelos corresponds to what political scientists have termed “negotiated sovereignty,” whereby the different levels of government in a federal system (such as Mexico) share and contest supreme authority.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Helga Baitenmann, “Popular Participation in State Formation: Land Reform in Revolutionary Mexico,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43, no. 01 (2011): 1–31 shows how villagers embraced local agrarian commissions sanctioned by national institutions.

<sup>37</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Federalism as State Formation in India: A Theory of shared and negotiated sovereignty,” *International Political Science Review* 31, no. 5 (2010), 553–572.

Such an approach challenges the master narrative of nation-state formation which presents sovereignty as a monopoly of the national government. It is important to note that villages did not seek simple "autonomy," which entailed independence and non-interference from Mexico City. Instead, shared sovereignty represented a form of conditional dependence in which rural communities courted the federal government in order to strengthen local control over elections, natural resources, and schools. It is equally important to note that contemporary *morelenses* did not use the term "sovereignty" (or "autonomy" for that matter). Rather, rural inhabitants expressed these concepts in traditional language such as the "true right of the pueblos" (*verdadero derecho de los pueblos*) or the "ideals of the pueblos" (*los ideales de los pueblos*) to capture the idea of local supremacy.<sup>38</sup> In another case, when *campesinos* perceived a centralized threat to village sovereignty, they warned federal representatives that "the pueblo knew how to impose its will."<sup>39</sup> Yet these phrases were different ways to emphasize the rural belief that the villages could only be governed by consent.

The pueblos of Morelos in the 1920s and 1930s can indeed be viewed as a bed of clams in that communities had the ability to shut and burrow themselves in the face of external threats. Villages remained largely open, however, and acquired sustenance from the outside world in various forms such as federal primary schools, agricultural aid, the Catholic Church, and regional and national political alliances. Rural communities could "filter feed" the external world of state-building policies emanating from Mexico City; they were sensitive to the stimuli of federal schools and skillful at resisting anticlericalism in the classrooms at the same time. Post-revolutionary villages were thus

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Jean Meyer, *La cristiada*, vol. 1: *La guerra de los cristeros*, 5th ed. (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2005), 378.

<sup>39</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 13, f. 40, Juan Ponce y Rodríguez to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 8 November 1934.

willing to shed or retain specific aspects of traditional village life while also embracing or opposing new influences at the same time, thereby redefining the character of the pueblo.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, the federal government grew stronger as it learned to govern mobilized villages. Alicia Hernández Chávez articulates how the Mexican Revolution produced a strong, centrist state by the middle of the twentieth century:

The *zapatista* dream of a republic of pueblos and citizens under municipal jurisdiction, represented by elected authorities to the town council, governed totally by elected officials at the three levels of government, was altered and gave life to a distinct pyramid of power.<sup>41</sup>

That mighty national state, however, had yet to emerge by 1940, when villages still possessed ample space to maneuver politically. Post-revolutionary Mexico, therefore, should be seen as a narrow but significant temporal window that allowed communities to evolve favorably with federal support, which, in turn, explains why rural Morelos backed the national regimes of the 1920s and 1930s.

### ***Research Findings***

With respect to politics, chapter one demonstrates how the villages of Morelos carried on the tradition of *buen gobierno* (good government) into the primaries of the official Partido Nacional Revolucionario (hereafter PNR) as a way to protect the electoral integrity of the pueblos. Like other states such as Sonora, Morelos displayed continuities

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<sup>40</sup> This dynamism should not, perhaps, surprise us. Paul Eiss's recent book on the communities of Hunucmá, Yucatán, for instance, explores the multiple meanings of the term "el pueblo" and how the concept cuts across class and ethnic lines to unite a diverse array of actors. Paul K. Eiss, *In the Name of El Pueblo: Place, Community, and the Politics of History in Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Alicia Hernández Chávez, "El zapatismo: una gran coalición nacional popular democrática," in *Zapatismo: origen e historia* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, 2009), 45. See also by the same author *Anenecuilco: Memoria y vida de un pueblo*, 2. ed. (Mexico City: Colegio de México y Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993) and *Breve historia de Morelos* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 2002).

in terms of its civic and liberal past based on a strong degree of local sovereignty.<sup>42</sup> Rural inhabitants used elections with remarkable success to make political authority contingent on popular consent. For instance, the experience of the 1920s and 1930s shows that Morelos was ungovernable without the pueblos' political consent. To achieve centralization, therefore, the high politicians of Cuernavaca and Mexico City were forced to reconcile their interests with those of mobilized local communities. Furthermore, this study finds elections in the 1920s and the period known as the Maximato from 1928 to 1934 to be much more competitive than is often thought.<sup>43</sup> During these years, the PNR quickly established itself as the only institution capable of organizing internal elections in all of Morelos's then thirty-two municipalities. These primaries, even at this early point, hosted the real competition for access to centralized power, as they could mobilize more people during the gubernatorial race than could actual constitutional elections.<sup>44</sup> Most

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<sup>42</sup> Ignacio Almada Bay, *La conexión Yocupicio: Soberanía estatal y tradición cívico-liberal en Sonora, 1913-1939*, (Mexico City: Colegio de Mexico, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> A new and much-needed dissertation examines politics in the 1920s. See Sarah Osten, "Peace by Institutions: The Rise of Political Parties and the Making of the Modern Mexican State, 1920-1928" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010). See also, Pedro Castro, *Álvaro Obregón: Fuego y cenizas de la revolución mexicana* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 2009). Older works on politics in the 1920s include Álvaro Matute, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1917-1924*, vol. 7: *Las dificultades del nuevo estado* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1995); Álvaro Matute, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1920-1924*, vol. 8: *Carrera del caudillo* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1980); Enrique Krauze, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1924-1928*, vol. 10: *La reconstrucción económica* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1977); Jean A Meyer, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1924-1928*, vol. 11: *Estado y sociedad con Calles* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1977). The most recent work covering the *maximato* is Jürgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007). Older works on the period from 1928 to 1934 include Lorenzo Meyer, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1928-1934*, vol. 12: *Los inicios de la institucionalización* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1978); Lorenzo Meyer, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1928-1934*, vol. 13: *El conflicto social y los gobiernos del maximato* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1978); Tzvi Medin, *El minimato presidencial: Historia política del maximato, 1928-1935* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1982); Arnaldo Córdova, *La revolución en crisis: La aventura del maximato* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 1995); Luis Javier Garrido, *El partido de la revolución institucionalizada: La formación del nuevo estado, 1928-1945* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1982).

<sup>44</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1928-1934*, vol. 12: *Los inicios de la institucionalización* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1978), 273. For the importance of party primaries in Mexico's gubernatorial politics, see Kathleen Bruhn, "Choosing How to Choose: From Democratic

importantly, the PNR learned not to repeat the abuses committed by the political parties of the mid-1920s, when capricious unelected governors imposed authorities in the municipalities. The state governments of the 1930s, of course, exercised their constitutional powers over local entities, but they learned to do so with relative respect for the pueblos' electoral integrity, at least compared to the impositions of the mid-1920s.

The second chapter argues that the agrarian reform did more than secure peace in the countryside and land, of course; it also offered villagers the opportunity to practice a lively form of agrarian democracy through elected ejidal assemblies. In particular, locals embraced official agrarian institutions and used them to defend their natural resources from corrupt politicians and ambitious neighbors. Control of the land reform resided with individuals and agrarian committees in the villages, especially during the 1920s. With federal support, villagers were able to recover Morelos's natural resources and left free to exploit nature's riches as they saw fit. The northern highland pueblos of Morelos, for instance, exploited the wooded hillsides to produce charcoal for commercial sale with no government oversight.

Decentralized control of the region's natural resources, however, had serious ecological consequences. In particular, deforestation led to decreasing amounts of available irrigation waters, which, in turn, heightened agrarian conflicts between pueblos. The post-revolutionary agrarian reform, that is to say, threatened an ecological catastrophe. Yet it was not so much that rural inhabitants lacked the ability to live in harmony with the surrounding natural environment, but rather the demands of reviving their communities overrode any long-term vision of conservation. In this regard, environmental history provides a new framework to examine the interactions of nature

and culture. In Miller's words, the natural environment "is more than mere backdrop to the human drama, more than the resource that sustains it."<sup>45</sup> Land, forests, and waters represent valuable commodities in each pueblo and the revolutionary reforms made it possible to reclaim them.

Chapter three, unlike most histories of Morelos, emphasizes control of water as the main engine of dispute driving agrarian struggles in the countryside.<sup>46</sup> Most studies of the region gloss over water and consider it as part of the general patrimony of the pueblos. Here, water is treated as a prized asset giving the farmer the main resource to grow commercial crops, particularly rice. By electing to cultivate rice on an extensive scale, indeed Morelos's agricultural workers showed that they were open to market forces.<sup>47</sup> The liquid became a constant source of conflict between neighboring

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<sup>45</sup> Shawn William Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2. See also Christopher R. Boyer, ed., *A Land Between Waters: Environmental Histories of Modern Mexico*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012). For a general history of water in Mexico, see Luis Aboites, *El agua de la nación: Una historia política de México, (1888-1946)* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1998). New studies of forests in the post-revolutionary period include Christopher R. Boyer and Emily Wakild, "Social Landscaping in the Forests of Mexico: An Environmental Interpretation of Cardenismo, 1934-1940," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 92, no. 1 (2012): 73-106; Emily Wakild, *Revolutionary Parks: Conservation, Social Justice, and Mexico's National Parks, 1910-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011). See also Mikael Wolfe, "Bringing the Revolution to the Dame Site: How Technology, Labor, and Nature Converged in the Microcosm of a Northern Mexican Company Town, 1926-1946," *Journal of the Southwest* 53, no. 1 (2011): 1-32; John Tutino, "The Revolutionary Capacity of Rural Communities: Ecological Autonomy and Its Demise," in *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico*, eds. Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina, and John Tutino (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> For two works that put water at the center of the *zapatista* struggle, see Valladares, *Cuando el agua se esfumó* and Alejandro Tortolero, *Notarios y agricultores: Crecimiento y atraso en el campo mexicano, 1780-1920: propiedad, crédito, irrigación y conflictos sociales en el agro mexicano* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2008), 161-183. The latter work argues that the competition for water, rather than land, was the principal factor that led to the *zapatista* rebellion.

<sup>47</sup> This finding supports Emilio Kourí's argument that peasants under certain conditions were willing participants in the market economy. See Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). By contrast, a recent work on the *jaramillista* movement in Morelos during the mid-twentieth century suggests that peasants resisted participation in the regional sugar economy. See Tanalis Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax-Priista, 1940-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).



communities because a lack of water deprived a village of a key source of material improvement. Complicating this equation were the Juntas de Aguas (water councils) established by the federal government in 1926 to distribute and administer the principle sources of irrigable water. The juntas, another arm of the executive branch, undercut previous rights enjoyed by the town councils and local associations of water users—namely the ability to collect payment for water usage and to manage the hydraulic system. In general, pueblos that possessed sufficient amounts of irrigation waters opposed the federal juntas, while those communities that lacked the liquid sought the intervention of federal authorities as leverage against stronger neighbors. An emphasis on water also reveals that the villages did not fight a revolution merely to retreat into their cornfields. As early as 1920, farmers planted rice for commercial sale, and production of the grain boomed during the decade. Participation in the market economy placed the pueblos in direct contact with the state, which attempted to regulate the sale of rice.

Chapter four shows how, through federal primary schools, villagers negotiated a place for local religion in the face of national pedagogical reforms hostile to the Catholic Church. Community control of the village patron saint represented the essence of the sovereign pueblo. The success of rural schools depended on the willingness of village parents, especially mothers, to send their children to class, participate in pedagogical activities outside the school, and construct and maintain educational facilities. Villagers found unique ways to promote education by creating micro-industries and cooperatives funded by school gardens that grew cash crops. Although well-received in the 1920s for the material improvement associated with the federal project, the school curriculum's leftist turn into a vaguely defined "socialist education" in 1934 led to a plunge in attendance in federal classrooms. That year, the state's anticlericalism offended rural sensibilities by broadcasting secular values into the heart of communities, flying in the

face of tradition. Only when President Lázaro Cárdenas rolled back anticlericalism in 1936 did attendance in primary schools resume normal levels. As such, this dissertation uses both a cultural and material approach to trace development of the federal government's educational project in rural areas.<sup>48</sup>

### ***A Note on Sources***

The archival research for this dissertation draws on many untapped collections in Morelos and Mexico City, which correspond loosely to the chapters presented in this study. For the first chapter on politics, the Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales collection in Gobernación (henceforth, Ministry of the Interior) and the presidential files at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Mexico City present a wealth of information on the struggles for power and the rise of the official party. While much of the Ministry of Interior's espionage reports cover politics at the state level, the collection contains dozens of accounts of elections in the municipalities. Understanding the state government's political relationship with the municipalities represents a key facet of the pueblos' ties with the outside world. In the presidential files of the AGN rest the correspondence from villages to the chief executives of Mexico, detailing the federal-municipal relationship in this period.

For the two following chapters on the agrarian reform, the Archivo General Agrario (AGA) and the Archivo Histórico del Agua (AHA) in Mexico City provide the bulk of primary sources. The AGA houses the documents pertaining to the land redistribution, with each community possessing several feet of papers covering the

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<sup>48</sup> For a cultural approach to federal schools, see Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997). A material approach to rural schools includes Elsie Rockwell, *Hacer escuela, hacer estado: La educación posrevolucionaria vista desde Tlaxcala* (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 2007). Wendy Waters, "Revolutionizing Childhood: Schools, Roads, and the Revolutionary Generation Gap in Tepoztlán, Mexico, 1928 to 1944," *Journal of Family History* 23, no. 3 (1998): 292–311 offers a blend of both approaches.

twentieth century. The documents detail the travails of the redistribution process and villagers' relationship with the National Agrarian Commission and its local offices in Cuernavaca, the Local Agrarian Commission (CLA). This study uses the files of thirty-three villages from the archival branch Dotación, Restitucion y Ampliación de Tierras Ejidales (roughly a fifth of the Morelos collection), and the files of five villages from the branch Dotación de Aguas. The selected cases give the study a broad geographic base of the agrarian reform from the northern highlands to the fertile Cuernavaca and Cuautla de Amilpas Valleys. Some files, such as those corresponding to the municipalities of Tetecala and Puente de Ixtla, were chosen to complement a wealth of information on these pueblos found in the AGN collections and the Morelos state archive. Others, such as the small villages of Tetelcingo, Amilcingo, and Moyotepec, each located in the heart of *zapatista* country, represent cases that have not been studied by previous investigators. Still other files, such as Chiconcuac, Villa de Ayala, and Anenecuilco produced new documentation to complement and reinterpret previous works. The AHA enhances the research in the AGA with document holdings pertaining to the eleven water juntas established by the federal government in Morelos after 1925. Several of these juntas, including those of the Cuautla, Yautepec, Amatzinac, and Apatlaco rivers, leave behind thousands of documents from 1926 to roughly 1934.<sup>49</sup> Not only do these papers contain the letters and petitions from villages, but also dozens of reports by engineers and inspectors, who visited the smallest of hamlets to inquire on water usage.

At the same time the federal water juntas arrived in Morelos, the Calles regime and the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) initiated a project of rural education in 1926 and established primary schools in pueblos across the state. The fourth chapter uses

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<sup>49</sup> Why the documentation significantly thins out around 1935 remains unclear. This could have been influenced by the *cardenista* reorganization of the agrarian bureaucracy.

an abundance of documentation in the SEP historical archive beginning in 1926, including hundreds of reports by schools inspectors. Each month these bureaucrats attempted to visit every village within their respective zones to check on the status and progress of rural schools. The files also contain correspondences from villagers detailing their interactions with teachers and federal institutions. Beginning in 1934, the Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (AHSEP) also collected documentation pertaining to the rebellion in eastern Morelos led by Enrique Rodríguez “*El Tallarín*,” whose revolt is the subject of the final chapter.

Several additional repositories complement the four national archives above. In Cuernavaca, the Archivo Histórico del Instituto Estatal de Documentación de Morelos (AHIEDM) houses several thousand documents on the 1920s and 1930s. A new source, it holds a rich collection of the CLA during the provisional land reform of the 1920s. The Tierras branch includes disparate quantities of documents pertaining to roughly fifty pueblos, complementing the AGA and AHA files. Records of agrarian conventions, governors’ correspondence, newspaper clippings, and financial documents pertaining to the haciendas can also be found in the underutilized state archive of Morelos. The Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca also proved a valuable resource for correspondence and reports by governors of the state. Finally, the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, especially its collection entitled *Revolutionary Mexico in Newspapers, 1900-1929*, houses crucial primary and secondary sources used for this study. All told, this dissertation utilizes archival documents pertaining to more than 100 pueblos, well over half of the 175 villages that existed in Morelos in 1933.

## Chapter I: Pueblo Politics and the Rise of the Post-Revolutionary State

The 1920s and 1930s in Morelos represent a period of transition from armed struggle to political stability and economic reconstruction.<sup>50</sup> Reintegrating the state's then twenty-six municipal seats into the political order became the central task. The most important factor determining how soon Morelos returned to normalcy was the governing classes' relationship with the pueblos of the state, because without village political consent, Morelos was simply ungovernable. The political struggles that slowly reshaped the countryside's relationship with Mexico City during the 1920s and 1930s can be broken down into four periods. First, weak central authority and political instability characterized Morelos under Álvaro Obregón's presidency from 1920 to 1924. In these years, former *zapatista* chiefs, the voices and symbols of the pueblos, battled civilian politicians in the state government who sought to reassert their authority over the municipalities. Those centralizing efforts largely failed but they ushered in a second period from 1925 to 1926, when electoral upheaval in Morelos destabilized the state-building process and further decentralized power. After political passions cooled, political stability returned to Morelos between 1927 and 1934, as the state government was buttressed by more social cohesion among a landed peasantry and a more active federal regime under Plutarco Elías Calles. Rural Morelos made real political gains during this third stage, especially in the form of definitive land resolutions, and villagers began to participate in the primaries of the official Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) as a way to influence elite *callistas* through party structures. This negotiated

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<sup>50</sup> Parts of this chapter were taken from Salvador Salinas, "The Partido Nacional Agrarista and the Quest for Power: Morelos in the 1920s," in *Mexico in Transition: New Perspectives on Mexican Agrarian History, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries/ México y sus transiciones: reconsideraciones sobre la historia agraria mexicana, siglos XIX y XX*, Antonio Escobar Ohmstede and Matthew Butler (eds.), Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (Mexico City, 2013), 357-384.

settlement between rulers and ruled, however, broke down in 1934, initiating a fourth and final period during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas from 1935 to 1940. At this time, a growing landless population, social reforms, and bureaucratic centralization increased tensions in rural areas and forced the national government to renegotiate its pact with the *morelense* countryside. The process culminated in about 1938, when former *zapatistas* won the governorship and all but one of the state legislature seats, symbolizing the power and persistence of Morelos's pueblos as political power brokers after nearly twenty years of rural state-building.

The travails of post-revolutionary politics stemmed from the fact that the Mexican Revolution had dismantled the old structure of Porfirian *jefatura* politics, and in its place had reemerged ideas of popular sovereignty rooted in Mexico's War of Independence (1810-1821), Liberal Reform of the 1860s, and *zapatismo*, of course. The municipalities of Morelos were therefore poised to reassert a local political tradition, but in contrast to the nineteenth century, rural inhabitants encountered an increasingly activist federal government in the 1920s and 1930s, whose policies and projects they embraced according to whether such programs could be made to serve local ends. Obregón, we shall see, paid little more than lip service to village sovereignty in Morelos and was resigned to let local actors settle political conflicts among themselves. Consequently, the battle over who would represent the villagers in the state government erupted after Obregón left office in December 1924. The Calles regime then spent a good two years responding to the warring political faction in Morelos, sending over a dozen spies to the region to investigate the complexities of local society. From their detailed reports, the political idiosyncrasies of *morelenses* and the terms on which it would be possible to bring the *zapatistas* into the state became clearer. The *cardenistas*, too, doubled down on their efforts to engage the rural polity by carrying out more land reform. Throughout

these ebbs and flows of state-building, rural inhabitants showed that when political elites could further the conditions of village sovereignty, they could bring rural Morelos into the national regime.

Following a chronological approach, this chapter begins to trace the pueblos' changing relationship with outside actors with a section outlining the history of *obregonismo* in Morelos from 1920 to 1924. Although rural communities were not politically homogenous, each governor's success or failure depended on their ability to coexist peacefully with the pueblos, or at least with a critical mass of them. A second section examines the changing political climate in Morelos during the brief chaotic electoral sequence of the mid-1920s, using the case studies of Puente de Ixtla and Tetecala to demonstrate how rural inhabitants rejected civilian politicians that offended village patriotism. A third section explores the rise of the PNR in Morelos from 1927 to 1934, when the *callista* regime learned how to govern Morelos and the party established local offices in every municipality in the state. It highlights the importance of PNR primaries at the local level to show how internal elections provided a forum for rural voters to influence party elites, while the old political culture defined by traditional chieftainship began to fade into the past. The final section investigates the breakdown and renegotiation of the alliance between the federal government and former *zapatista* combatants during the *cardenista* presidency, concluding with a discussion of the changes and continuities in the politics of post-revolutionary Morelos.

### ***Obregonismo & Traditional Chieftainship, 1920-1924***

The end of the armed revolution in 1920 and the forging of the *zapatista* alliance with president-elect Álvaro Obregón of Sonora marked the beginning of political

reconstruction in Morelos.<sup>51</sup> With Obregón's blessings, the former combatants and civilians in the *zapatista* movement took control of the state and local governments. Among the most powerful figures in Morelos after Zapata's death was General Genovevo de la O, who assumed the strategic position of chief of military operations in the state in 1920. De la O hailed from the northwestern highland village of Santa María Ahuacatlán and his influence spread southward into lowland Morelos and westward into the Estado de México. As the official chief of military operations of the state from 1920 to 1924, De la O emerged as a leader in state politics and his political clout spread beyond northwestern Morelos. Ever since his pre-revolutionary days defending Santa María's lands from the Temixco hacienda, De la O, like most chiefs, had close ties to his home village. But not even De la O, or any other *zapatista* for that matter, was influential enough to unite all of Morelos's revolutionary factions. Only Zapata had been capable of that. Rather, De la O used his position of authority to defend pueblos against abuses (often electoral) committed by civilian politicians. In the face of a rapidly changing political milieu, he championed traditional chieftainship, which stressed longstanding military service and allegiance to villages rather than external connections or intellectualism as the prerequisites for power. These principles led De la O to clash with politicians who had not sprung from the pueblos in 1911, and who therefore did not have village interests at the heart of their governing agenda.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The alliance between the Sonorans and the *zapatistas* had origins in the presidential succession of 1920. In April of that year, Obregón's supporters announced the Plan de Agua Prieta which called for a national revolt to overthrow President Venustiano Carranza. Given the atrocities committed in Morelos by Carranza's army, the *zapatistas* backed the plan. *Obregonistas* then assassinated Carranza while the president fled to Veracruz and Obregón won the July 1920 presidential election. See Womack, *Zapata*, 357-364.

<sup>52</sup> Surprisingly, no good biography of De la O exists. Only incomplete details of his life can be found scattered in various works. For his political and military exploits in the 1910s, see Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata*; Womack, *Zapata*; Felipe Angeles, *Genovevo de la O*, (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1987). For De la O's political life in Morelos from 1919 to 1924, see Edgar Damían Rojano García, *Las cenizas*. See also Jaime Vélez Storey, "Genovevo de la O y la unificación revolucionaria de



Prominent among the civilians that entered Morelos politics was Dr. José G. Parres, who held the post of provisional governor from 1920 to 1923. Parres was born and raised in Hidalgo and joined the Liberating Army of the South in 1914 as a medic. The military wing of the *zapatista* coalition, led by De la O, selected Parres to serve as governor in June 1920, probably because they thought he would be weak and malleable.<sup>53</sup> This selection overrode Gildardo Magaña's candidacy and the purely civilian wing of *zapatismo*.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, events would show that De la O and the generals could control Parres in the governorship and dispose of the doctor if he ever stepped out of line. Parres himself became symbolic of the non-*morelense* politicians and intellectuals who surrounded *zapatismo* in the 1910s and sought to dominate it thereafter. These individuals exercised influence in Morelos because of their connections in Mexico City with organizations such as the National Agrarian Party (hereafter PNA), which was founded and led by Antonio Soto y Gama in 1920 and, by virtue of its leader's former *zapatista* affiliations, became a credible interlocutor between popular agrarianism and the state.<sup>55</sup> Yet they could not count on a base of support in the pueblos to the degree that the

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1920: Aspectos políticos," in *Zapatismo: Origen e historia* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, 2009) and Alicia Salmerón Castro, "Un general agrarista en la lucha contra los cristeros. El movimiento en Aguascalientes y las razones de Genovevo de la O," *Historia Mexicana* 44, no. 4 (1995): 537–579. The most complete source for De la O remains his personal archive located in the AGN.

<sup>53</sup> Rojano García, *Las cenizas*, 58.

<sup>54</sup> For brief biographies of nearly one hundred *zapatistas*, both militants and civilians, see Valentín López González, *Los compañeros de Zapata* (Mexico City: Ediciones Gobierno del Estado Libre y Soberano de Morelos, 1980); Agur Arredondo Torres, *Los valientes de Zapata*, vol. 1: *Guerrilleros de la zona sur del estado de Morelos y del norte de Guerrero* (Cuernavaca: Unidad de Culturas Populares e Indígenas del Instituto de Cultura de Morelos, 2002); Agur Arredondo Torres, *Los valientes de Zapata*, vol. 2: *Guerrilleros de la zona sur del estado de Morelos y del norte de Guerrero* (Cuernavaca: Unidad de Culturas Populares e Indígenas del Instituto de Cultura de Morelos, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> Biographical accounts of Soto y Gama include Jeffrey Kent Lucas, *The Rightward Drift of Mexico's Former Revolutionaries: The Case of Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010); Pedro Castro, *Soto y Gama: Genio y figura* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2002); Pedro Castro, "Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama y las vicisitudes del Partido Nacional Agrarista," *Iztapalapa* 50, no. enero-junio (2001): 379–408.

chiefs could. Parres's governorship, for example, became mired in personal conflict with De la O after repeated accusations that the governor committed electoral fraud in the municipalities.

For this reason, relations between Parres, the PNA, and De la O soured shortly after the medic assumed office. Villagers frequently wrote to De la O detailing the schemes of local politicians who had connections to Governor Parres through the PNA. The PNA's political clout was strongest in the national Congress, where Soto y Gama served as federal deputy representing his home state of San Luis Potosí from 1920 to 1928. But at the grassroots, locals accused PNA members in the agrarian bureaucracy of threatening to take away lands from villagers who did not vote for the party. As one subordinate wrote to De la O,

in my land propaganda is being carried out for municipal president. First, the agrarian party was formed, made up purely of people from the state and the city, but they are directed by two *licenciados* [sic]...they tell the pueblo that he who does not vote for the agrarian club will not have land (*disen* [sic] *al pueblo que el que no bote* [sic] *por el club agrarista no tendra tierras*).<sup>56</sup>

Even the colloquial Spanish here reveals that a cultural chasm separated the urbane clubbiness of the PNA and the personalistic authority of De la O. Then, in 1922, opposition to the Mexico City-based party began to organize beyond individual pueblos. Prominent chiefs such as De la O, Pioquinto Galis, José Rodríguez, Zeferino Ortega, and Francisco Alarcón declared that Parres and “the new ‘men of letters and schemes’ were sordidly exploiting the ideals and sacrifices of the pueblo of Morelos and particularly of working people in the fields.”<sup>57</sup> This situation worsened after the annual municipal

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<sup>56</sup> AGN, Particulares, De la O, caja 36, exp. 6, Jesús Hernández to De la O, not dated.

<sup>57</sup> AGN, Particulares, De la O, caja 60, exp. 2, Memorandum by De la O and the above, 1 August 1922. Before the declaration, in April 1921, Parres held a two-hour meeting with De la O, who laid out several reasons for his “disgust.” The general resented the fact that Parres employed persons not from Morelos in his administration who had served under past *carrancista* governments. Parres admitted the accusations were true, but he argued that these employees served as low-level clerks and copyists who possessed no

elections held in December 1922, when various pueblos—Miacatlán, Huitzilac, and Xochitepec, as well as residents of Cuernavaca and Cuautla—sent telegrams and letters to the federal government accusing the governor of violating the popular vote and imposing unelected municipal councils.<sup>58</sup> Pressure mounted on Parres, who now sought the intervention of Obregón. The governor requested that the president send his personal representative to Morelos in order to judge fairly the disputes revolving around the electoral law. Obregón rejected the proposal with a reprimand, however, stating that it would not be “appropriate nor decorous to send [a] person [to] oversee your acts, because [the executive office] believes that you, precisely, are a representative of authority.”<sup>59</sup> The national regime wanted no part of local electoral disputes in Morelos.

The PNA was not the only national party to establish a foothold in Morelos politics, because for political organizations based in Mexico City, rural Morelos represented a mobilized and symbolically important electorate. Most notably, the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (hereafter CROM) and its political vehicle, the Mexican Labor Party (hereafter PLM), gained many adherents in Morelos politics during the early 1920s. The CROM was formed in 1918 and it would for over a decade become the most dominant labor organization in Mexico, as both Presidents Obregón and Calles

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influence in the governor’s administration. FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 10, inv. 4353, leg. 1, ff. 14, 16, 19, 21-24, Parres to Calles, 19 April 1921, Parres to De la O, 18 April 1921, Parres to Calles, 21 April 1921, Parres to Calles, 26 April 1921.

<sup>58</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 408-M-2, Asociación de Hijos del Estado de Morelos to Obregón, 9 January 1923, Antonio Pliego to Obregón, 27 December 1922, Residents of Miacatlán and Huitzilac to Obregón, 2 January 1923, Guadalupe Sánchez to Obregón, 8 January 1923. In his defense, Parres cited violations of the electoral law and the need to form temporary local governments to reconvene elections. AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 408-M-2, Decree no. 28, 31 December 1922.

<sup>59</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 408-M-2, Obregón to Parres, 30 December 1922, Parres to Obregón, 29 December 1922. For accounts of politics and policies during the Obregón presidency, see Linda B. Hall, “Alvaro Obregón and the Politics of Mexican Land Reform, 1920-1924,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (1980): 213–238; Pedro Castro, *Álvaro Obregón: Fuego y cenizas de la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 2009); Jürgen Buchenau, *The Last Caudillo: Alvaro Obregón and the Mexican Revolution* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

appointed members of the confederation to their presidential cabinets. Although each claimed to champion CROM labor struggles, it would be President Calles who allied most closely with the *laboristas*. In any case, CROM's weight in local *morelense* politics could be seen by the early 1920s. For example, around the same time that Parres lobbied Obregón for support in 1923, CROM members in Tepoztlán supported the *zapatista* faction battling the sons of Porfirian caciques. One specific case, whereby the village's CROM adherents (the so-called *bolcheviques*) were jailed by their rivals known as the *centrales*, illustrates how all three levels of government interacted and how affiliations with national parties and politicians infiltrated local politics. After three weeks in a Cuernavaca jail, one of the CROM members later recalled their release:

Then the jailkeeper came in with the newspaper. Whew! It said that if the seventeen peasants in jail were not set free in twenty-four hours, than the judges of Cuernavaca would go in under the same charges. Signed, Obregón! Even the jailkeeper jumped. "Man! You've got influence! Just look at that, even signed by the President of the Republic!"...José Parrés was Governor then. He was playing politics because some people wanted to get him out of the governorship...they took us to see him...He saw that we were all furious and said, "Look here, boys, those scoundrels took advantage of you because I wasn't around. I am a member of the CROM, too, so don't you worry. This is a great victory. But don't you go around causing any sudden deaths because then we'll lose everything. None of that, eh! All that sort of thing is finished. Everybody observes the law, now."<sup>60</sup>

In truth, Parres's administration identified most closely with the National Agrarian Party, but the fact that the governor claimed CROM membership reveals how national organizations could be invoked for political survival by embattled state and local politicians. What is indeed surprising is the extent to which CROM's influence had spread into the *morelense* countryside and how rapidly it had done so. By 1926, the confederation had established dozens of peasant unions in pueblos across the state.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, 132-133.

<sup>61</sup> Rocío Guadarrama, *Los sindicatos y la política en México: la CROM, 1918-1928* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1981), 208-210.

*Laboristas* were thus expanding into the *agraristas*' stronghold and trying to overhaul the PNA, setting off a heated rivalry that would destabilize Morelos politics.

Before the storm, however, Obregón made a last attempt to save Parres by personally traveling to Cuernavaca in a show of support for the governor in March 1923. For appearances' sake, the local political class temporarily set aside differences and rallied behind the president.<sup>62</sup> The president's visit represents an example of the national chieftain using his personal prestige to negotiate political conflicts among his loyal followers, yet his charismatic authority was insufficient to unite a divided state. Indeed, continued pressure from the pueblos and De la O forced Parres to abandon his office, as he secretly fled Cuernavaca in the early hours of 14 December, at the same time that Adolfo de la Huerta launched a rebellion from Veracruz. De la Huerta—a member of the so-called Sonoran Triumvirate—had served as provisional president in 1920 before Obregón assumed office, but the latter's decision to back Calles in the 1924 presidential contest led De la Huerta, also a presidential aspirant, to revolt against the federal government. Back in Morelos, Parres relinquished his post at this moment because the national crisis presented De la O with an opportunity to finally depose him through force and install a loyal supporter, Alfredo Ortega, as interim governor. With no other options, Obregón ratified Del la O's coup. The caudillo from Santa María then defeated Rómulo Figueroa's *delahuertista* forces, which invaded from Guerrero.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> For Obregón's visit to Cuernavaca, see Rojano García, *Las cenizas*, 125-126.

<sup>63</sup> For the De la Huerta rebellion in Morelos and *zapatista* military actions outside of the state, see Rodolfo López de Nava Baltierra, *Mis hechos de campaña: Testimonios del general de división Rodolfo López de Nava Baltierra, 1911-1952* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1995), 101-123; Rojano García, *Las cenizas*, 135-155. Former *zapatistas*, both civilians and soldiers, overwhelmingly supported the government during the rebellion. More than fifty generals came out of retirement and gathered some 2,000 men to take up arms for the government. Why so few *morelenses* joined the rebels is obvious: with the peasantry in control of the land, the once recalcitrant region now represented a bastion of federal support.

The military victory and departure of Parres could have left De la O as the undisputed leader of Morelos politics, but the general was himself soon mired in accusations that he had taken advantage of the rebellion to settle old scores with rival chiefs. Most notoriously, it was widely believed that De la O was behind the December 1923 assassination of General Gabriel Mariaca, who was a native of Morelos and had revolutionary credentials going back to his days as a *maderista*. The scandal angered many officers and rank-and-file soldiers under De la O's command and caused the caudillo to lose prestige among his troops and in the pueblos.<sup>64</sup> The general's flaws as a politician then became evident through his choice of governor, Alfredo Ortega—a *mexiquense*. Apparently, De la O selected outsiders to run the government because they would not be beholden to any of the political factions in Morelos except his own. He indeed used Governor Ortega to try and tighten his control over the agrarian movement: soon a report circulated in the agrarian bureaucracy that the governor commissioned an individual to depose unfriendly village land committees.<sup>65</sup> This type of behavior was consistent with De la O's past dealings with rivals during the armed revolution and the De la Huerta rebellion.<sup>66</sup> Yet the purges only heightened tensions between Cuernavaca and the pueblos because De la O now had enemies across Morelos; it was obvious he had learned little from the mistakes committed by the Parres administration. Another observer claimed that these impositions "are being repeated all over the state or in the majority of pueblos, worsening the conflict."<sup>67</sup> Shortly after these reports appeared, scandals involving De la O and Governor Ortega beset Morelos's participation in the

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<sup>64</sup> Rojano García, *Las cenizas*, 147-149, 156.

<sup>65</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tetelcingo, exp. 23/2980, leg. 4, f. 37, A. Villalpando to CNA, 23 June 1924.

<sup>66</sup> Take, for instance, De la O's longstanding conflict with General Francisco Pacheco of Huiztilac that resulted in the latter's death in 1916 after he was accused of treason. Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata*, 93-95, 187-189.

<sup>67</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tetelcingo, exp. 23/2980, leg. 4, f. 38, Illegible to CNA, 20 May 1924.

1924 national elections. In Cuernavaca, the official candidates and their supporters were chauffeured from one voting station to another in order to take control of electoral documents and personnel. The groups backed by Governor Ortega also intimidated opponents by brandishing pistols, often with the connivance of the federal army.<sup>68</sup> These instances of corruption further tainted De la O's name and reputation and demonstrate that he had overestimated his charismatic authority in his native state. After the 1924 debacles associated with the presidential election in Morelos, the national Congress deposed De la O's puppet governor, Alfredo Ortega.<sup>69</sup>

The National Agrarian Party, which still held influence in Congress, now sent Ismael Velasco to serve as provisional governor of Morelos. De la O openly opposed the appointment of Velasco, who, like Parres, was from outside the state and a member of the PNA. He then threatened to post guards at the entrance of the government's central offices to prevent Velasco from assuming the governorship. With a touch of irony, the general stated that "the people no longer want outsiders who solely come to disturb and deceive those of Morelos." He then reassured Obregón: "If disorders or the like should occur, take little notice because it's only a local matter and has nothing to do with the central government."<sup>70</sup> With De la O openly hostile to the next PNA-appointed governor and the Obregón regime perhaps fearing that Velasco would be dominated by De la O as easily as Parres and Ortega had been, the War Department decided to transfer the caudillo to Tlaxcala as head of military operations in the state. On that same day (20 September), three trains carrying six hundred soldiers arrived in Cuernavaca. General Juan

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<sup>68</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 2, ff. 5-10, Report by D. Galicia Ortega, 11-12, 16 July 1924. Days later when the parties and state officials gathered for the counting of the votes in Cuernavaca, the presidents of the voting stations from Tepoztlán were "kidnapped in order to prevent them from attending the junta." AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 2, f. 17, Report by Agente Confidencial, 10 July 1924 and ff. 1-4, Reports by Agente #15, 23, 24 October 1924.

<sup>69</sup> Rojano García, *Las cenizas*, 165.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Rojano García, *Las cenizas*, 166.

Domínguez, originally from Baja California, took control of military operations in the state and Velasco, now safe from De la O's intimidation, assumed the governorship.<sup>71</sup> Domínguez was a battle-hardened veteran, who Obregón believed was the solution to Morelos's problems. The president was clearly more concerned about possible resistance to Velasco, and with integrating civil and military power under a new federal remit, than he was about the imposition itself. Although the removal of De la O from Morelos would be Obregón's last major intervention in regional political affairs, it turned out to be one of the most costly, as the state soon entered a short period of electoral upheaval on a scale it had not experienced before.

### ***Electoral Upheaval, 1925-1926***

De la O's removal from Morelos created a power vacuum that climaxed in a chaotic electoral sequence in 1925-1926. New struggles between civilian politicians, unelected provisional governors, generals, and rural folks erupted during these years. No less than six career *políticos*—half of them from outside Morelos—attempted to govern the state from Cuernavaca.<sup>72</sup> All of these unelected officeholders were appointed by the national legislature, and they all repeated the mistakes of their predecessors by imposing loyal *políticos* in the municipalities, which alienated the *pueblos* and led to serious protests. Take, for example, Ismael Velasco, who managed to last a full year in Cuernavaca.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Valentín López González, *El Morelos posrevolucionario, 1919 a 1930* (Cuernavaca: Instituto Estatal de Documentación de Morelos, 2002), 13.

<sup>72</sup> The provisional governors of from Morelos from 1924 to 1927 were Alfredo Ortega (December 1923-September 1924); Ismael Velasco (August 1924-September 1925); Juan Hidalgo Rojas (October 1925-February 1926); Valentín del Llano (February 1926-June 1926); Heraclio Rodríguez (June 1926-August 1926); Alfonso María Figueroa (August 1926-March 1927). López González, *El Morelos posrevolucionario*; Elizabeth Amalia Molina Ramos, "Pérdida y recuperación del orden constitucional en Morelos, 1913-1930," in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8, 111.

<sup>73</sup> Velasco, who, incidentally, was not from Morelos either, but an ex-member of the House of the World Worker who met Soto y Gama in Mexico City in 1913 and followed him to Morelos. Velasco had fought in the *zapatista* ranks, and later worked in the state as an employee of the CNA, all of which made him the



Numerous pueblos accused Velasco of imposing municipal councils and not respecting the popular vote. One group opposed to the governor wrote to President Calles in 1925 to demand a solution to the “endless chain of abuses committed by the state authorities of Morelos,” declaring that the region depended on the “capricious will” of individuals “who are not Morelenses.”<sup>74</sup> Velasco, of the PNA, also angered rice growers in the southern hotlands when he tried to instate a one-peso tax on every kilogram of rice sold out of state. Rice farmers likened the tax to an *alcabala* (sales tax) and refused to pay it.<sup>75</sup> As a result of the state government’s actions, democratic governance and clean elections in the pueblos practically vanished in 1925-1926, as was reflected in the fact that villagers wrote an enormous amount of correspondence to national authorities detailing local struggles during this period. Likewise, Gobernación sent over a dozen spies to Morelos to investigate the anarchy of local politics. By relaying information on the conflicts unfolding on the ground between the municipalities and the state government, however, national authorities learned to deal more effectively with the rural population. This process can be seen especially clear in the two well-documented case studies of Puente de Ixtla and Tetecala, both of which highlight the interactions of all three levels of government during this mini-period.

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kind of urbane *zapatista* that rustics like De la O so resented. AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 164, exp. 19, ff. 1-2, Report by Agente #4, 11 November 1924.

<sup>74</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, vol. 146, exp. 408-M-29, Comité Pro-Morelos to Calles, 25 April 1925. In Xochitepec, after the murder of a *campesino* who refused “to shout vivas for the candidate of imposition, Reynoso Díaz,” the locals pleaded with Calles to disarm “members of the Partido Agrarista, the only villagers allowed to carry arms with impunity.” AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, vol. 3, exp. 101-M-5, J.C. Sedano a Calles, 19 August 1925). Around the same time in August, residents of Axochiapan claimed that some fifty-armed men arrived at the field of Palo Blanco, fired shots into the air, and took two villagers prisoner to Cuautla for opposing the PNA. AGN, Gobernación, IPS, vol. 2030-B, exp. 213, f. 20.

<sup>75</sup> *Excélsior*, 23 August 1925. Puente de Ixtla, Yautepec, and Jojutla, among many other pueblos, petitioned Calles to intervene and to oust Velasco. AGN, Gobernación, IPS, vol. 2030-B, exp. 13, ff. 51-52, Report by Agente #15, 22 September 1925.

The case of Puente de Ixtla demonstrates the bitter local divisions that existed within the agrarian communities and, just as clearly, their links to state and national politics. Various forces—Governor Velasco’s PNA, *callista* interlopers, and their respective peasant allies; a corrupt CNA official, and a *hacendado*, who sought to profit from his enemies’ confusion—collided in Puente de Ixtla. This southwestern municipality in Morelos, adjacent to Guerrero, was among the first pueblos to receive a definitive land grant signed by Obregón in 1922. Its *ejido* consisted of lands taken from the Vista Hermosa and San Gabriel haciendas. Over three hundred families received title to 2,664 hectares of land, nearly a quarter of which included irrigated plots.<sup>76</sup> Little by little, the pueblo also recovered from the revolutionary war. The inhabitants first rebuilt the town hall, installed a public clock, and constructed a girls’ school; by 1925 they planned to finish work on a small electrical plant.<sup>77</sup> Outside forces, however, upset any harmony that may have existed in the municipality.

Puente de Ixtla’s troubles began during the De la Huerta rebellion, when invading forces under Rómulo Figueroa took control of the local government and maintained political dominance in the village even after the defeat of the *delahuertistas*.<sup>78</sup> Governor Velasco and the PNA exacerbated factional tensions in Puente de Ixtla in November 1924, when a personal representative of the governor appeared in the village to depose a member of the ejidal executive committee. The municipal president backed this action, and the local ejidal administration descended into anarchy for several months. No single faction could take control of the agrarian committee. A majority group, led by Aurelio

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<sup>76</sup> AGN, Comisión Nacional Agraria, Resoluciones Presidenciales, vol. 12, ff. 102-106.

<sup>77</sup> The correspondence regarding the conflict in Puente de Ixtla can be found in AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 818-P-58.

<sup>78</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Puente de Ixtla (Puente de Ixtla), exp. 23/2958, leg. 9, f. 295, Fidencio Villegas to CNA, 16 May 1924.

Villegas and hostile to the PNA, could not overcome a minority group led by the municipal president. A third party, Emmanuel Amor, the owner of the San Gabriel hacienda, tried to take advantage of the village's internal divisions by maneuvering to take control of mango orchards that lay on the outskirts of Puente de Ixtla's *ejido*. In response, Villegas wrote Calles and the agrarian authorities numerous times, accusing Amor of striking a deal with the CNA's secretary, César Córdova, that would allow him to reclaim the orchards. It was true that Amor sent a hacienda representative to Cuernavaca, and that he employed both his sons, Manuel and Ignacio, to lobby on his behalf.<sup>79</sup> In March 1925, however, after receiving numerous petitions, Calles sent a representative to Puente de Ixtla to oversee the election of a legitimate ejidal committee. Calles's local supporter, Villegas, won the contest and became president of the agrarian administration. Yet from the moment of victory, Villegas sent a torrent of complaints to the federal government accusing Velasco, the municipal president, and a delegate from the National Agrarian Commission (hereafter CNA) of obstructing the elected ejidal committee.

Around the same time, outsiders appeared in the orchards and began picking the fruit. Doubtless these were Amor's minions, as the *hacendado* later attempted to sell seventy crates of mangos and offered to pay for them if the CNA ordered him to do so. A federal army detachment was called in to avoid violence and to protect Amor's access to the orchards. Locals blamed everything on politics, or Puente de Ixtla's refusal to engage in the political activity that Velasco's PNA required. "Little to nothing have we been able to dedicate to partisan politics," Villegas wrote on behalf of the villagers, a fact that

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<sup>79</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 818-P-58, Ignacio Amor to Calles, 7 May 1925.

“has profoundly disgusted certain political leaders in the local government.”<sup>80</sup> In sum, Puente de Ixtla’s *ejido* was carved up by a community of outside interests: Velasco and his local proxy, the municipal president, on the one hand, who between them sought to force the *ejidatarios* to support the PNA and meddled in their internal elections when they resisted; and, on the other hand, the estate owner who, through his own proxy (the CNA’s *secretario*), tried to bring in a valuable mango crop. The object of these illegal pressures—Villegas, the elected ejidal commissioners, and most villagers—declared that they upheld and lived by the principles of the agrarian revolution, but could not be strong-armed into supporting a political party.

Ultimately for Villegas’s faction, strategic recourse to national authority allowed the orchards to remain in the *ejido*, but only after much bureaucratic wrangling. To begin with, the CNA ordered the pueblo’s ejidal committee to respect the decision to return the hacienda’s orchards, and did so, apparently with little sense of embarrassment, by invalidating the land survey carried out by its own engineer on grounds of some technical infringement. The orchards legitimately belonged to the San Gabriel hacienda, said the CNA. The evidence suggests, therefore, that the *hacendado*, Amor, did indeed come to an agreement with the CNA regarding the fruit trees. How or why or exactly with whom the agreement was made remains unclear, but Amor struck at an opportune moment, as internal divisions deepened in the pueblo when Governor Velasco attempted to create a loyal electoral base by installing loyal followers in the ejidal committee. Nonetheless, Puente de Ixtla’s ejidal leaders continued to petition the federal government, forcing the CNA in June 1925 to send yet another engineer to Puente de Ixtla to further study the matter. This time, however, the investigation concluded that the current secretary of the

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<sup>80</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 818-P-58, Aurelio Villegas to Secretario de Agricultura y Fomento, 18 May 1925.

CNA had mistakenly upheld a 1924 decision by his predecessor, César Córdova, to give control of the orchards to Amor; the fruit trees, therefore, rightfully belonged in the *ejido* because in no way could Puente de Ixtla's definitive land grant be altered.<sup>81</sup> These events in Puente de Ixtla reveal how repeated village protests could force national institutions to side with *ejidatarios* in conflicts with local elites, even if the CNA had to reverse its previous decision that enabled the *hacendado* to collect the pueblo's fruit crop in 1924-1925.

The Puente de Ixtla case reminds us that even ejidal assemblies were part of much larger political formations, be they electoral coalitions or webs of patronage, and so could be destabilized by distant political disputes. Yet the example also shows that villagers sought to create high-level alliances, as Puente de Ixtla's elected agrarian authorities lobbied President Calles to intervene in an instance where the ejidal assembly was outnumbered by CNA corruption, the *hacendado*, the governor, and local caciques. For locals, the lesson learned was that outside actors could be both sources of discord and support, and therefore alliances had to be cultivated strategically. For President Calles, the lessons were clear: resolutions to disputes in Morelos required decisive responses by the executive and a willingness to override abusive state governors and corrupt agrarian officials. If Puente de Ixtla represents one of the pueblos whose clashes with the governor upset internal social harmony most severely, other villages also loathed official *agraristas*. The violence at Tetecala one evening in August 1925 would be among the bloodiest episodes in Morelos since the end of the fighting five years prior.

The western municipal seat of Tetecala also suffered at the hands of corrupt outside influences, internal divisions, and rival pueblos. Since 1921, Tetecala had

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<sup>81</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Puente de Ixtla (Puente de Ixtla), exp. 23/2958, leg. 9, ff. 569-570, Memorandum by CNA, 4 June 1925.

petitioned the Local Agrarian Commission (hereafter CLA) for lands for three years with no success. While neighboring pueblos such as Miacatlán and Mazatepec and a military colony led by general Salvador Saavedra took control of the best rain-fed and irrigated lands in the region, agrarian authorities in Tetecala quarreled with several CLA engineers. Landless residents accused the CLA representatives of siding with *hacendados* and smallholders. Finally, after years of lobbying the CLA and renting lands from nearby haciendas, the state government issued a provisional land grant in June 1924. The granted lands, however, included fields coveted by Coatlán del Río and the military colony at the Actopan hacienda.<sup>82</sup>

On 13 May 1925, at the same moment that Emmanuel Amor was pulling strings with national agrarian authorities in the dispute with Puente de Ixtla, soldiers arrived in Tetecala. Upon their arrival, General Juan Domínguez, the military chief of Morelos, and several subordinates announced that they had orders from the Minister of War and Calles to return the lands used by Tetecala to the Actopan hacienda and Emmanuel Amor. The soldiers ordered the local agrarian authorities to sign a document that would relinquish their control of the land, which they refused. The soldiers gave them a choice: “they would sign the document or, on the contrary, they would be sent to Mexico City bound and beaten (*mecateados*),” reported an agent sent to investigate the matter.<sup>83</sup> Tetecala’s agrarian authorities then signed the paper without telling the village’s *campesinos*, buying time before the pueblo realized their mistake. Again, exactly with whom Amor was cutting deals inside the federal bureaucracy in the mid-1920s remains unclear. This time, however, the state and federal governments sided with Tetecala against the intrigues of

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<sup>82</sup> For a wealth of documentation on Tetecala’s agrarian history in the 1920s, see AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tetecala (Tetecala), exp. 23/3092, legs. 1-2; AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 743, legs. 3-4.

<sup>83</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 743, leg. 4, Jesús Aguilera to Secretario General de Gobierno, 16 May 1925.

the *hacendado*. Calles sent a note to the Minister of War to respect Tetecala's provisional land grant, indicating to local *agraristas* that they could count him on their side in local disputes.<sup>84</sup> All the while, tensions in Tetecala stirred between the agrarian authorities and the municipal president in a situation eerily similar to that of Puente de Ixtla.

Tetecala then held municipal elections in July 1925. PNA members backed by Governor Velasco lost. Under false pretexts, Velasco annulled the results of the contest and called for new elections. The PNA lost a second time. Within days, the governor sent men to Tetecala with instructions to take control of the election documents before the residents could form a new government. The automobile the men travelled in broke down en route, forcing them back to Cuernavaca. Informed of the failure, Cuernavaca's police inspector, Felipe Vital, proceeded to travel to Tetecala himself. On his journey, he stopped in Coatlán del Río, Miacatlán, and Mazatepec, where he rallied dozens of armed PNA supporters to accompany him to Tetecala. In a Mazatepec cantina, discussion of a plan to apprehend Tetecala's elected officials was overheard. The eavesdropper quickly went to the village to warn the residents. Tetecala's elected officials took refuge in a house in front of the army barracks. At nine o'clock that evening, 14 August, Vital and his men knocked on the door of the house. As the door opened, bullets rained down on the occupants. Those inside returned fire. Vital fell wounded and died several hours later from his wounds, the only assailant to fall. Six residents of Tetecala lay dying on the floor of the house that night.<sup>85</sup> Following the massacre, villagers from Morelos sent a storm of protests to President Calles denouncing Velasco and stories of the bloody events

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<sup>84</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tetecala (Tetecala), exp. 23/3092, leg. 2, f.187, Calles to L. Leon, 23 May 1925; AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 743, leg. 4, David Pastrana Jaimes to Emilio Nava and residents of Tetecala, 20 May 1925.

<sup>85</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, vol. 48, exp. 14, ff. 62-63, Report by Agente #6, 3 September 1925; AGN, Gobernación, IPS, vol. 2030-B, exp. 13, f. 26; *El Sol*, 18 August 1925.

at Tetecala circulated in the national press.<sup>86</sup> Even those with no affiliation to the deceased raised a voice: the “victims do not belong to our party,” the Grupo Libertario Emiliano Zapata declared to Calles, “but for humanity” they asked him to intervene to oust the “infamous despotism oppressing Morelos.”<sup>87</sup> Governor Velasco was widely accused of having a hand in a political massacre involving members of the PNA. The tragedy gave the federal government scope to act. Consequently, Calles and the Senate deposed Velasco in September 1925 from the governorship. No one protested Velasco’s ousting. For villages across the state, his removal was a blessing.

The ousting of Velasco represents one of the clearest examples of the municipalities bypassing the state government and successfully lobbying federal intervention. More generally, the villages looked to Mexico City for leverage in their struggles against impositions by state governments during this period. The residents of Santa María Alpuyeca, describing the chaotic politics of the mid-1920s, wrote to Calles in typical style: “All we know is that every day things go from bad to worse and who knows where we shall end if the Supreme Federal Government does not save us.”<sup>88</sup> Petitions such as these made it known to national officials that Morelos demanded stronger federal involvement in order to ensure political stability and to guard against despotism in Cuernavaca. Rural inhabitants, that is to say, considered it better to ally with Mexico City than with Cuernavaca. This pattern set in 1925-1926 paved the way for stronger ties between the central government and the rural polity. Throughout the mid-1920s, in fact, pueblos not only lobbied the federal regime through written letters and

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<sup>86</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 101-M-5, Juan Campos to Calles, 16 August 1925; AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 101-M-5, Silvina Ocampo to Calles, 19 August 1925; *El Sol*, 8 September 1925.

<sup>87</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Obregón y Calles, exp. 101-M-5, 19 August 1925, Silvano Sotelo and Vereo Guzmán to Calles, 19 August 1925.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Gruening, *Mexico*, 476.



telegrams, but they also sent delegations to Mexico City to demonstrate in favor of and against governors.<sup>89</sup> Petitions and mobilization, in other words, were now taking the place of ballots and elections.

The campaigning culminated in the gubernatorial election of 1926, the first held since 1912. Recall that at this time Morelos still operated under unelected provisional governments appointed by the national legislature, as no state legislature existed during the 1920s to give the municipalities a formal voice in Cuernavaca. Given the abuses committed by members of the PNA, it is not surprising that most of the chiefs supported its main rival, the Mexican Labor Party and its patron, Calles. Numerous influential *zapatista* generals—Genaro Amezcua, Jesús Capistrán, Dolores Damián Flores, Timoteo Sánchez, Zeferino Ortega, and Gil Muñoz Zapata—publicly declared their support for the PLM candidate, Senator Fernando López.<sup>90</sup> The recent scandals involving public officials, they believed, “had provoked the resurgence of the reaction.”<sup>91</sup> That so many generals—over a dozen—supported the *laborista* candidate demonstrates the degree to which the PNA and *obregonismo* had declined and the PLM, CROM, and *callismo* had risen in mid-1920s Morelos. The state’s political youth also supported the *laboristas*, and village clubs once controlled by the PNA fled to the PLM.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, the election of 1926 only prolonged instability in Morelos when three parties declared victory and created rival legislatures. The resulting debacle forced the federal government to

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<sup>89</sup> *Excelsior*, 25, 29 January 1927, 10, 12 February 1927; *El Universal*, 12, 13 February 1927.

<sup>90</sup> Fernando López was originally from Morelos and represented his native state in the Senate. He formed the Partido Libre Morelense, which allied with the PLM at the national level. López had worked on the national railways since his youth and climbed his way up to superintendent. During the De la Huerta rebellion, he mobilized trains in Morelos on behalf of the federal army and campaigned in favor of Calles, undoubtedly winning him political capital in Mexico City. AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 164, exp. 17, Report by Agente #15, 7 October 1924.

<sup>91</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 1, “Por qué los Zapatistas apoyan á Fernando López,” 1 October 1925.

<sup>92</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 1, ff. 6-9, Report by Agente #12, 21 January 1926.

intervene and annul the election results. More politicians came and went for the next year. Cuernavaca, still semi-destroyed and under populated in the mid-1920s, was described during this period as a “cemetery in a florid garden.” Only government employees, soldiers, and tourists inhabited the capital. After visiting the attractions, tourists walked the streets taking photographs of houses and buildings ruined by the revolution. Commercial activity was at a halt and public services non-existent.<sup>93</sup>

Six months after the violence at Tetecala, on the eve of the 1926 gubernatorial contest, a second political massacre struck Morelos. On 6 February, dozens of workers from the National Highways Commission were bussed into the state capital to participate in a demonstration in favor of one of the candidates, Carlos Ariza. When the raucous crowd arrived at Cuernavaca’s central square they were met by *laboristas*, who shouted “viva López!” The opposing camp countered with shouts of “viva Ariza!” Leaders from both groups simultaneously drew their pistols and fired; both were killed. Moments later the city police arrived and fired on the *laboristas*, killing and injuring several. The *aristas* suffered no further casualties. At least seven people died as a result, including a twelve-year-old boy. Ariza, who stood on the balcony of his hotel not far from the central plaza during the shooting, quickly fled the city. The state government soon apprehended several police officers involved in the slaughter.<sup>94</sup>

The following day, of course, witnessed widespread irregularities at voting stations across the state. Three candidates declared victory and established rival legislatures. The political standoff ended only after the federal government annulled the elections, citing the irregularities committed.<sup>95</sup> The state-building project in Morelos lay

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<sup>93</sup> *El Universal*, 7 July 1925.

<sup>94</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 1, ff. 227-234, Report by Agente #22, 13 February 1926; *El Excelsior*, 7 February 1926.

<sup>95</sup> *El Universal*, 19 February 1926; Gruening, *Mexico*, 466.

in tatters, with the national government exercising little more influence in rural areas than it had six years before. Morelos hit a political low point, while interim governors came and went for the remainder of 1926. Yet the the ordeal provided the region's inhabitants and the *callistas* with invaluable governing experience that would be put into practice once political passions settled.

### ***Callismo & the Rise of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario, 1927-1934***

Among the first lessons learned from the 1926 debacle in Morelos was that the individual selected by Congress to govern until constitutional elections could be convened had to be chosen with delicacy. For this reason, Calles refused to nominate a provisional governor from the Mexican Labor Party to assume office in Cuernavaca "because the majority of *morelenses* are connected to any one of the groups that are disputing control of the state, and the executive wants a person, who, beyond being apt the for the position, does not have ties to *agraristas* or *laboristas*."<sup>96</sup> By doing so, Calles demonstrated that he could govern independently of his closest supporters and place the interests of the rural populace above his own faction's political aims. Then, Congress appointed Ambrosio Puente as provisional governor in March 1927, who endured three years in Cuernavaca. Little is known of Puente's background except that he was an ally of Calles, but what enabled his longevity in the post was the fact that the governor did not ride roughshod over village elections and impose authorities in the municipalities. Puente realized, in other words, that in order to avoid political instability and to coexist peacefully with rural Morelos the pueblos had to be allowed a degree of sovereignty. In fact, Puente largely ignored the question of elections all together and instead focused on reconstruction, giving his political enemies reason to attack him. The provisional governor could buy

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<sup>96</sup> *El Universal Gráfico*, 15 March 1927.

time, however, because he had strong backing from both Calles and his successor, Emilio Portes Gil (1928-1930). President Portes Gil himself wrote to Puente's enemies to assure them of his commitment to the provisional governor, citing the improving economic situation, which benefitted the peasant class.<sup>97</sup> This close arrangement between Cuernavaca and Mexico City was also due to Puente's role in arresting General Francisco Serrano, who plotted against the federal government from Cuernavaca in October 1927.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, the governor remained loyal during the Cristero War and cooperated with national authorities to defend Morelos from invading rebels from Guerrero.<sup>99</sup>

From the village perspective, Puente gave the pueblos room to breathe politically by respecting the outcomes of local elections, which explains the drop in the number of village protests that had inundated the federal government in the mid-1920s. Puente, rather, used the prestige of his office to resolve conflicts between pueblos and refused to deploy the army when tensions between rural communities rode high.<sup>100</sup> For example, he was able to negotiate water-management accords between rival pueblos and channel material resources into village reconstruction. The governor believed that before a gubernatorial election could be held the state's finances had to return to order and that economic reconstruction would pave the way for democratic elections.<sup>101</sup> Meanwhile, shortly after the failed gubernatorial election of February 1926, the national government began to invest more resources in Morelos to construct public works and rural primary

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<sup>97</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Emilio Portes Gil, exp. 5/367, Portes Gil to José Guati Rojo, 20 July 1929.

<sup>98</sup> Sergio Valverde, *Apuntes para la historia de la revolución t de la política en el estado de Morelos. Desde la muerte del gobernador Alarcón, pronunciamiento de los grales. Pablo Torres Burgos y Emiliano Zapata mártires, hasta la restauración de la reacción por Vicente Estrada Cajigal, impostor*. Mexico City, 1933, 303-304.

<sup>99</sup> For Puente's correspondence with the federal government, see AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 277, exp. 14.

<sup>100</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, f. 188, Puente to Gumaro Garcia de la Cadena, 18 June 1929.

<sup>101</sup> FAPECF, PEC, exp. 103, inv. 4268, leg. 1, ff. 5-11, Puente to Calles, 11 June 1927.

schools, and federal water juntas were established to administer the region's waterways. These were clear signs that all three levels of government were at last working in tandem toward the common goal of rebuilding the state.

Yet perhaps the most important way the *callista* regime showed its commitment to an alliance with rural Morelos was by delivering definitive land titles. Of the 189 presidential resolutions executed in Morelos between 1920 and 1929, nearly half of the cases were resolved in 1927 and 1929 alone, precisely when Morelos was proving loyal and the violence of the Cristero War peaked and threatened the stability of the federal government (see Appendix A). Military strategy was not the sole consideration accelerating the land reform in the late 1920s, however. Villagers themselves clamored for definitive resolutions, because the provisional titles executed by the state government in the early 1920s could be altered or revoked and gave no long term security. In Jojutla, for example, as early as 1923, farmers demanded a definitive land grant. Each month local rice growers read the state government's official newspaper and saw other pueblos receiving definitive resolutions. "We have waited with angst" for the president's final decision, wrote residents to the Local Agrarian Commission. A presidential resolution would "completely ensure our rights over these lands that we deem our heritage and that of our children...we have waited for this solemn moment to arrive."<sup>102</sup> This type of petition increased under Calles.<sup>103</sup> A peasant league in Axochiapan wrote in 1926 that until the pueblo received a presidential resolution, their property remained in an "insecure position" and that *ejidatarios* could not fully devote themselves to reconstruction.<sup>104</sup> The

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<sup>102</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Jojutla (Jojutla), exp. 23/3077, leg. 1, f. 166, Comité Particular Administrativo to CLA, 5 November 1923.

<sup>103</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tlalquilténango (Tlaquilténango), exp. 23/3078, leg. 2, f. 63, illegible to CNA, 11 November 1926.

<sup>104</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Axochiapan (Axochiapan), exp. 23/3072, leg. 3, f. 74, Liga de Resistencia de Camp. Morelense to Luis León, 14 June 1926.

presidential resolutions also entailed concrete benefits and access to government aid such as agricultural credit. In 1927 the inhabitants of Tlalquiltenango demonstrated this when they urged the CNA to proceed with a definitive resolution, because, without it, the pueblo could not obtain credit from the government-sponsored Agricultural Bank.<sup>105</sup> That same year Totolapan's ejidal committee requested its provisional resolution in order to create an official agrarian cooperative.<sup>106</sup> Despite these pleas, most pueblos kept waiting until the Calles presidency to obtain definitive titles. The Calles regime, that is to say, actively provided tangible benefits for the rural populace in the form of primary schools, public works, definitive land titles, and access to credit, whereas Obregón tried to stay above the political fray in Morelos and use his charismatic authority to resolve issues. For these reasons, a period of political stability and relative social cohesion in the pueblos characterized the late 1920s and early 1930s. Political violence waned during these years, and cases such as those of Puente de Ixtla and Tetecala in 1925 were not repeated in the municipalities. Morelos was now riper than ever for building a loyal electoral base.

As a sense of normalcy returned to Morelos, political crisis shook Mexico in 1928 after president-elect Obregón was shot by a religious zealot in the "La Bombilla" restaurant in Mexico City. As is well known, Calles responded by creating the PNR in 1929 in a top-down effort to unite all the revolutionary factions under one umbrella party.<sup>107</sup> Back in Morelos, the PNR was formed just as talk of holding gubernatorial

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<sup>105</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tlalquiltenango (Tlaquiltenango), exp. 23/3078, leg. 2, f. 81, Delfino García to CNA, 18 August 1927.

<sup>106</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Totolapan (Totolapan), exp. 23/3005, leg. 2, f. 98, Felipe Livera to CNA, 19 April 1927.

<sup>107</sup> For a study on the origins of the official party in Mexico, see Garrido, *El partido*. See also Stuart F. Voss, "Nationalizing the Revolution: Culmination and Circumstance," in *Provinces of the Revolution: Essays on Regional Mexican History, 1910-1929*, eds. Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).

elections gained steam in early 1930. To ensure the contests would be convened with impartiality, Puente resigned from the governorship in March. The official daily of the newly created PNR applauded the move and reminded readers that Morelos had not possessed a constitutionally elected governor since Patricio Leyva held the post in 1913 during the presidential administration of Francisco Madero. The national Congress then sent Carlos Lavín to assume the governorship with orders to convene election promptly.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, a convention sponsored by the PNR was held in Cuernavaca to select the party's ticket of candidates in the coming campaign. Vicente Estrada Cajigal, a native of Cuernavaca and a trusted associate of President Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932), won the nomination for governor and campaigned in all eight districts of the state.<sup>109</sup> In Tlaltizapán and Ticumán alone, over three hundred veterans of the revolution organized to welcome Estrada Cajigal, while 5,000 supporters rallied behind the PNR candidate in Cuernavaca.<sup>110</sup> On election day, few disturbances were reported and Estrada Cajigal won the governorship in a landslide victory with 21,000 votes.<sup>111</sup> Estrada Cajigal's extensive campaigning across Morelos with the backing of PNR elites, coupled with the opposition's lack of a viable alternative, gave the ticket a sense of inevitable victory. Of the four gubernatorial elections held in Morelos during the post-revolutionary

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<sup>108</sup> *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 5,6, 7 March 1930.

<sup>109</sup> During the armed phase of the revolution, Estrada Cajigal served as chief of Ortiz Rubio's personal escort while fighting in Michoacán. For a brief biography of Estrada Cajigal, see Itzayana Gutiérrez Arillo, "Hacia la biografía política de un héroe institucional: Vicente Estrada Cajigal, 1898-1973," in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8: *Tierra, gente, tiempos del Sur*, eds. María Victoria Crespo and Luis Anaya Merchant (Cuernavaca: H. Congreso del Estado de Morelos, 2010).

<sup>110</sup> *El Nacional*, 11 April 1930.

<sup>111</sup> *El Nacional*, 25 April 1930. The only upheaval related to the 1930 gubernatorial campaign occurred two weeks after the election. Alfonso Figueroa, who only won two thousands in contest but was unwilling to concede defeat, rose up in arms in Jojutla, taking control of the municipal offices. A column from the Federal army entered the pueblo and arrested over eighty people, while Figueroa escaped to Hidalgo where he appealed for amnesty. López González, *El Morelos posrevolucionario*, 30-35.

period, indeed the 1930 contest represents the most peaceful transition of executive power.

The return to constitutional order in 1930 and the *callistas*' respect for village sovereignty went a long way toward restoring normal relations between the pueblos and centralized authority. Here we should also recall that the absence of a state legislature in Morelos between 1914 and 1929 had deprived the municipalities of a formal voice in Cuernavaca. In the early 1930s, however, each of the seven state congressmen could claim roots in Morelos.<sup>112</sup> As a consequence, the number of village petitions arriving in the presidential office dropped dramatically, while Gobernación archived only a few espionage reports on Morelos from 1928 to 1933. Also of significance was the fact that during the early 1930s the municipal governments of Atlatlahucan, Emiliano Zapata, and Temixco were created to ease tensions between rural communities and distribute power more evenly in the countryside; hence the PNR oversaw a more locally represented political geography.<sup>113</sup> Once the state legislature reconvened in the early 1930s, it passed numerous laws to reorganize and fund the state government.<sup>114</sup> Economic reconstruction, which had stalled for much of the 1920s, then began to accelerate with political stability. The state government's finances returned to order, and the governor's office gained a reputation for donating school supplies and building materials to villages in order to reconstruct the irrigation system and classroom facilities.<sup>115</sup> Road building also expanded and linked more isolated settlements to the larger commercial centers of

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<sup>112</sup> None of the state legislators were former generals. For short biographies of the seven state legislators in 1930, see López González, *El restablecimiento del orden constitucional en el estado de Morelos* (Cuernavaca: Gobierno del Estado de Morelos, 1980), 57-84.

<sup>113</sup> Valentín López González, *Morelos, historia de su integración política y territorial: 1200-1977*, 2 ed. (Cuernavaca, 1998), 82-83.

<sup>114</sup> For these laws and decrees, see AHIEDM, Gobierno, cajas 62-69.

<sup>115</sup> See chapters three and four.



Cuernavaca, Cuautla, and Jojutla.<sup>116</sup> It was also in the early 1930s when Calles purchased the estate known as Quinta Las Palmas on the outskirts of Cuernavaca, where soldiers and prominent politicians such as Governor Carlos Riva Palacios of Estado de México came and went. Estrada Cajigal, who had a close relationship with Calles, could be seen riding on horseback with the *jefe máximo* in Cuernavaca.<sup>117</sup>

Most importantly, Governor Estrada Cajigal, like his predecessor Puente, better managed the state capital's relationship with the pueblos than had previous administrations. One way he did this was by writing to the federal government on behalf of pueblos to explain problems in the *ejidos*, thereby projecting Morelos's rural voice into the offices of the national executive and enabling power to be more effectively articulated.<sup>118</sup> Estrada Cajigal took official tours of rural areas to speak personally with *ejidatarios* about their plight and by doing so learned the complexities of rural issues.<sup>119</sup> He accumulated enough knowledge to subsequently write a multipage report titled "General Consideration of the Study of the Agrarian and Ejidal Problem in the State of Morelos," which circulated in national offices.<sup>120</sup> Estrada Cajigal's positive relationship the Morelos countryside did not go unnoticed by national elites. In fact, Calles felt comfortable enough about the situation in Morelos to appoint Estrada Cajigal as the Jefe del Departamento del Distrito Federal for seven months in 1932. Later that year when Estrada Cajigal returned to the governorship in Cuernavaca, villagers in the Federal District lamented his departure to Calles. Apparently, the governor had also cultivated

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<sup>116</sup> AHIEDM, Agricultura, caja 1, exp. 7, pp. 4-7, "Estudio Agrologico del Estado de Morelos," 1929. For photographs of road construction in the 1930s, see AHIEDM, Gobierno, caja 128, exp. 7.

<sup>117</sup> *Morelos Nuevo: Periódico oficial del estado de Morelos*, 18 December 1932. For a photograph of Calles and numerous politicians in Cuernavaca, see *El Nacional*, 13 August 1934.

<sup>118</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Abelardo L. Rodríguez, exp. 552.1/147, Estrada Cajigal to Rodríguez, 16 November 1932.

<sup>119</sup> *Morelos Nuevo*, 3 January 1932.

<sup>120</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 102, Inv. 1933, leg. 1, ff. 32-41, not dated.

good relations with the pueblos of the Federal District. Residents from Tepepan, a village some thirty kilometers north of Morelos, wrote that Estrada Cajigal was “well intentioned” and “knew how to interpret the needs of *los de abajo* and solve difficult problems.”<sup>121</sup> Back in Morelos, Estrada Cajigal boasted to national authorities that *campesinos* had collaborated with the state government to build reconstruction projects such as roads and schools, volunteering labor and even donating money for the completion of public works.<sup>122</sup>

As Estrada Cajigal consolidated the PNR system, by the middle of his term in 1932, it was becoming apparent to all that the real competition for political power was already occurring within the structures of the PNR rather than constitutional elections. After the 1932 municipal contests, the state’s official newspaper announced that the most notable aspect of the vote was a lack of “the slightest incident or intent of disorder, which is very significant and shows the idiosyncrasy of morelenses, always standing by their traditions.”<sup>123</sup> Fewer instances of electoral fraud and less meddling by state politicians allowed the pueblos to “decompress” politically between 1927 and 1933.<sup>124</sup> It may be surprising that rural communities were given more room for self-governance during the Maximato, which is often viewed as a period of centralization, but it was the period when a high percentage of village families gained formal access to lands and a say in primary polls. In 1930, for instance, over three-fourths of the rural population worked ejidal

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<sup>121</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 102, Inv. 1933, leg. 1, ff. 7-8, Demetrio to Calles, 19 August 1932.

<sup>122</sup> AHEIDM, Tierras, caja 744, leg. 9, Estrada Cajigal to Comité Ejecutivo del PNR, 26 April 1934.

<sup>123</sup> *Morelos Nuevo*, 18 December 1932.

<sup>124</sup> An anomaly in this trend occurred in 1932, when voter petitions crying electoral fraud poured into Calles’s offices during the PNR’s primary elections to select national congressional candidates. FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 103, inv. 4628, leg. 2, f. 116. Dip. Leopoldo Heredia to Calles, 7 April 1932, f. 117, Arcadio Pérez to Calles, 23 July 1932, f. 126, Odilón Pchoa to Calles, 25 July 1932, f. 129, Veterans from Anenecuilco to Calles, 27 July 1932.

plots.<sup>125</sup> The peasantry's secured rights to the soils, in other words, translated into political stability, as locals asserted more control over pueblo institutions such as the town councils, schools, and agrarian committees.

The question remained, however, whether or not the state government could carry out a second and consecutive peaceful transition of power in 1934. Before the gubernatorial contest that year, the PNR convened primaries in January, which marked a key moment of party formation in post-revolutionary Morelos. Practically every faction with ambitions to capture the governorship participated in the contests held in January. That both former revolutionaries and civilian politicians alike now considered themselves members of the PNR speaks to the rapid rise of the organization in Morelos. Over 19,000 individuals voted in the January primaries. It was the first statewide contest in which the party flexed its organizational muscle in the countryside, and it was also watched closely by authorities in Mexico City. Fifteen Gobernación spies descended on rural Morelos to oversee and report on elections in every municipal seat.<sup>126</sup> Gobernación ordered every postal and telegraph office in the state to relay the election results back to the capital, “without intervening in them.”<sup>127</sup>

Francisco Álvarez, the official candidate supported by Governor Estrada Cajigal, ran the most spectacular operation in Cuernavaca. Days before the contests, propaganda circulated throughout the state capital announcing a “national luncheon” and “popular celebration” at nine in the morning in Cuernavaca Stadium, where the *alvaristas* would gather to count votes. Álvarez promised boxing matches, cockfights, music bands,

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<sup>125</sup> Hernández Chávez, *Breve historia*, 191.

<sup>126</sup> AGN, Gobernación IPS, caja 165, exp. 8, f. 13, Document by Eduardo López M. listing the names of the spies and their destinations in Morelos, 11 January 1934.

<sup>127</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 8, f. 10, Eduardo Vasconcelos to Secretario de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas, 11 January 1934.

dancers, *charros*, free food, and free bus rides to and from the stadium and Jardín Morelos for all those who wanted to attend the event. A federal agent found “many families, women, and children” that morning in the stadium and “six barrels of pulque” to liven up the festivities. Not surprisingly, Álvarez won the votes of Cuernavaca’s thirty-two delegates to represent him at the state party convention afterwards.<sup>128</sup> In Cuautla, the *alvaristas* counted votes in the bullring, where a horse show (“*jaripeo*”) and bullfight were held for voters.<sup>129</sup> Meanwhile, busloads of farmers from small pueblos poured into the municipal seats to cast votes. Mobilizing buses full of *campesinos* was so important to the candidates’ voter turnout strategies that the *alvaristas* destroyed a bridge connecting Jojutla and Tlaltizapán to prevent the passage of their rivals.<sup>130</sup> Álvarez, however, was ultimately outmatched by his rival, Refugio Bustamante, who held a seat in the Morelos state legislature and was widely known to be supported by national Senator Carlos Riva Palacio. Bustamante employed similar tactics to the *alvaristas* and won a third of the total votes casted on election day, thereby becoming the official PNR candidate for governor in 1934. The primaries were in fact now the main forum for political struggle. When, for example, the constitutional elections were held three months later, a Gobernación agent noted “the elections passed with marked indifference,” as Bustamante was the only candidate to participate in the campaign.<sup>131</sup> In just four years, therefore, the PNR had established itself as the only party capable of delivering electoral victories in Morelos. Part of its electoral strategy—distributing booze and providing entertainment during primary elections—was, of course, old-fashion patronage,

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<sup>128</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 66, exp. 2, ff. 125-127, Report by agente #4, 15 January 1934.

<sup>129</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 8, ff. 63-64, Report by Donato Herrera, 15 January 1934; AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 8, ff. 65-68, Report by Ricardo F. Medina, 15 January 1934.

<sup>130</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 8, f. 88, Report by Alfonso Rosado, 15 January 1934.

<sup>131</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 8, f. 171, Report by Gabriel Cotines, 19 April 1934.

but popular participation in the internal contests also showed that the political culture of rural Morelos was maturing out of traditional chieftainship and into an electoral system of political parties. It had taken a good six years since political stability returned to Morelos in 1927 to establish a functioning electoral system in which PNR leaders could mobilize the rural electorate and villagers could have a say in the official ticket through primary voting. Yet progress on the political front faced an uncertain future as both a new governor of Morelos and president of Mexico assumed power in 1934.

### ***Cardenismo & the Renegotiation of Pueblo Loyalty, 1934-1940***

With Ambrosio Puente and Vicente Estrada Cajigal gone, the alliance between Mexico City and rural Morelos broke down. This was due to several factors. Population growth, social reforms, bureaucratization, and renewed stormy relations between Cuernavaca and the municipalities put new pressures on agrarian communities. While the state never returned to the chaos of the mid-1920s, the relative social and political cohesion that characterized the early 1930s vanished. One reason for this was that Governor Bustamante failed to live up to the pact with the pueblos. He was typical of the state's non-*zapatista* political class and his governing style became a source of rocky relations between Cuernavaca and the municipalities. A Cuautla businessman with investments in agriculture, Bustamante fled Morelos during the revolution and returned in 1916 to launch a career in local politics.<sup>132</sup> While politicians in Morelos never opposed agrarian

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<sup>132</sup> Bustamante had worked on the Tenextepango hacienda as a teenager, and then gone into business after the death of his father. When the revolution erupted in 1911, he moved with his family to Mexico City, only to return after 1916 when notorious *carrancista* General Pablo González occupied Cuautla. The Bustamante family settled and worked lands on the former Coahuixtla hacienda. Bustamante won the strategic Cuautla municipal presidency in 1929. A year later he won a seat in the state legislature, and two years after that he won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies representing his home state. In Congress, Bustamante allied with the powerful Senator Carlos Riva Palacio. He briefly served as the president of the Cuautla River water junta, giving him intimate knowledge of the region's most pressing agricultural issues. Valentín López González, *Gobernadores del estado de Morelos* (Cuernavaca: Instituto Estatal de Documentación de Morelos, 2000), 9.

reform, Bustamante sought to channel all organization, mobilization, and demands of the popular classes through the government and official party. His rise had more to do with an alliance with the powerful Senator Carlos Riva Palacio, president of the PNR from 1933 to 1934, than his popularity in the pueblos, as both the governor and the senator were loyal *callistas*.

These *callista* credentials were now of declining value, however, as the years of 1934-1936 witnessed the decline and fall of Calles as the most powerful figure in Mexican politics and the emergence of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). Indeed, as *cardenismo* rose as a political force in the pueblos, *callistas* lost their political tough and grew more remote and manipulative. Villages in Morelos abetted this national regime change by denouncing the *callista* governor to Cárdenas, which further isolated Bustamante politically. Cries of official meddling in local elections resurfaced during his administration and split the state legislature into pro and anti-Bustamante factions.<sup>133</sup> In the meantime, official corruption became blatant.<sup>134</sup> Then the state teacher's union, formed in 1934, allied with national organizations and struck against Bustamante's regime in 1936, in protest at its attempts to control the appointment of teachers in pueblos.<sup>135</sup> Within the PNR, a struggle erupted for control of the state party between the governor's *callista* faction on the one hand and a loose coalition of *cardenistas* on the

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<sup>133</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 7, ff. 9-12, Report by I-5, 22 April 1935 and f. 16, Report by I-85, 30 April 1935.

<sup>134</sup> Politicos, for example, were often seen walking the streets of Cuernavaca armed. Ehecatl Dante Aguilar Domínguez, "Los sucesores de Zapata. Aproximaciones a la trayectoria, subversión y transformación de los revolucionarios zapatistas en el Morelos posrevolucionario," in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8, 72.

<sup>135</sup> Most of Morelos's federal primary school teachers went on strike in January 1936. The strike was resolved by April, when federal authorities retained the right to appoint rural teachers, thereby weakening the governor's hold over the municipalities. The event did, however, alienate some business groups and local parents, who protested the politicization of their children's teachers and the closings of schools. For the strike, see AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 134, exp., ff. 10-11, Liga to Lázaro Cárdenas, 22 January 1936; ff. 24-25, Ignacio Carranza to Cárdenas, 25 January 1936, f. 26, Valentín Carrillo to Cárdenas, 25 January 1936, ff. 27-28, Julio Adán to Cárdenas, 24 January 1936.

other. The struggle pitted the governor and his supporters against the Morelos Liga de Comunidades Agrarias (hereafter Liga), the state teacher's union, leftists in the state legislature, and dozens of chiefs in the pueblos.<sup>136</sup> One of Bustamante's greatest misdeeds came in 1935, when he held a secret meeting in Yautepec to conspire against and remove unfriendly PNR committees in the municipalities.<sup>137</sup> The maneuver reeked of the impositions of the mid-1920s and complaints against the governor landed in Cárdenas's offices.<sup>138</sup> Attempts such as these to remove political figures from the town councils ultimately cost the *callistas* control of the Morelos PNR. To make matters worse, the governor and his allies in the municipalities used heavy-handed tactics to deal with former *zapatistas* who would not fully support the state regime, leading Enrique Rodríguez "*El Tallarín*" to launch an armed rebellion from eastern Morelos that threatened political stability in the state.<sup>139</sup> *Callista* efforts to cling on to power made Morelos ungovernable once again.

There was a demographic explanation as well as a political one. Tensions also stirred inside rural communities because population growth put new pressures on natural resources by the mid-1930s. Specifically, the statewide agrarian reform attracted landless peasants from Guerrero to settle in Morelos, dividing villages between natives and newcomers. In 1940, it was estimated that *guerrerenses* made up a third of the total population in Morelos.<sup>140</sup> Most of this migration appears to have occurred in the 1930s;

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<sup>136</sup> The Morelos Liga was created in October 1935 in Cuautla when 25,000 *ejidatarios* joined the organization. Emigdio Marmolejo was elected its first general secretary. See, *El Nacional*, 5, 7 October 1935.

<sup>137</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 433/24, ff. 39-41, Dip. Pablo E. Sotelo Regil to Manuel F. Ochoa, 14 February 1935.

<sup>138</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 433/24, f. 48, Residents of Tlalquiltenango to Cárdenas, 15 February 1935, ff. 53-54, Residents of Yautepec to Cárdenas, 13 February 1935.

<sup>139</sup> See chapter five.

<sup>140</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 140, exp. 5, f. 3, "Noticias relativas al Estado de Morelos," 17 June 1940.

there is little mention of *guerrerenses* living in Morelos pueblos in the documentation of the 1920s. This was especially so in the hotlands of southwestern Morelos adjacent to Guerrero, where plentiful irrigation waters allowed rice cultivation to flourish in the post-revolutionary period. Across the state, a nativist pulse, which had justly characterized village opposition to the non-*morelense* governors of the 1920s, resurfaced in the 1930s to divide factions at the village level. *Morelenses* viewed the newcomers with suspicion and tried to keep them out of communal decisions.<sup>141</sup> Land invasions and cattle raiding launched by peasants from Guerrero exacerbated these pueblo tensions.<sup>142</sup> Even worse, complaints arose during the land reform of the mid-1930s that some agrarian bureaucrats gave newcomers preference over natives of Morelos in deciding who would receive ejidal plots.<sup>143</sup> Established families in the pueblos reacted by attempting to prevent *guerrerenses* from gaining ejidal plots or influence in local politics. An agrarian leader from Panchimalco (Jojutla) went so far as to declare in front of an applauding audience in Cuernavaca that not all villagers should have the same rights; the founders of the *ejido* and their direct descendants should have first come first serve access to the best fields.<sup>144</sup> State and local politicians capitalized on these sentiments and appealed to voters' regional loyalty with slogans such as "First the Morelenses and then the Mexicans."<sup>145</sup> Divisions such as these went beyond politics and physically segregated pueblos, with migrants from Guerrero often residing in separate neighborhoods. Finally, it was the

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<sup>141</sup> Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth*, 148.

<sup>142</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 503.11/156, f. 18, Residents of Cliserio Alanís to Cárdenas, 4 December 1935; AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 404.1/3657, ff. 18-19, Refugio Bustamante to Secretario Particular de la Presidencia de la República, 8 April 1936.

<sup>143</sup> AGA, Ampliación de Ejidos, Amacuzac (Amacuzac), exp. 25/2952, leg. 6, ff. 34-35, 12 May 1937.

<sup>144</sup> AHIDEM, Tierras, caja 753, leg. 2, p. 11, "Versión taquigráfica del Primer Congreso Estatal de Comisariados Ejidales, que tuvo lugar en la ciudad de Cuernavaca, Morelos, durante los días quince y dieciséis de mayo de mil novecientos cuarenta."

<sup>145</sup> Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, 46.



native and better-off *ejidatarios*, according to Rounds's case study of Yautepec, who forged closer ties with central authority as a way to prevent the landless from gaining any rights. As a result, their dependence on outside authorities grew as they sought to defend the status quo and reward loyal inhabitants during a decade of rapid population growth.<sup>146</sup>

In the mid-1930s, all these factors heightened rural dissatisfaction with the official party and threatened to undo the gains made in Morelos since the late 1920s. Take for instance the PNR primaries held in late 1937. The turnout for the internal elections was so low—less than half the total of the 1934 turnout—that the state party annulled the electoral results and fielded no official candidate in the constitutional contests held in April of 1938. This constituted a major blow to Bustamante, because the annulment amounted to a motion of no confidence by party authorities. Consequently, members of the party were free to vote for whomever they pleased in the constitutional races.<sup>147</sup> The state PNR had thus responded to the low turnout in the primaries and would not allow an official candidate with little internal support to dominate the constitutional elections. It was a notable concession to rural voters, who would reward party elites by turning out in high numbers for the popular contests. In sum, the *cardenista* state had allowed the pueblos to hand-pick a successor to Bustamante by thwarting his attempt to fix the PNR primaries.

Governor Bustamante characteristically attempted to impose a loyal successor in the 1938 state elections, but rural mobilization overwhelmed his campaign. The year 1938, in fact, was the apogee of pueblo power in Morelos politics. Elpidio Perdomo, a former colonel in the *zapatista* army, won the gubernatorial contest, even though three

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<sup>146</sup> Christopher Robert Rounds, "From Hacienda to Ejido: Land Reform and Economic Development in Yautepec, Morelos, 1920-1970" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1977).

<sup>147</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 78, exp. 18, ff. 27-28, Memorandum by PS-3, 5 February 1938.

additional local candidates with revolutionary credentials, Emigdio Marmolejo,<sup>148</sup> Maurelio Mejía,<sup>149</sup> and Porfirio Neri,<sup>150</sup> further split rural ballots. The contests witnessed higher voter turnout than any of the previous statewide races, and though voting irregularities were reported across the state, Perdomo won the race handily with over 26,000 of the 38,000 ballots cast, most of which came from 32,000 *ejidatarios* in the countryside.<sup>151</sup> Still, Bustamante refused to recognize the election results, and a ten-day standoff ensued between two rival legislatures. On 1 May, six hundred *perdomista* farmers poured into Cuernavaca from the surrounding countryside. Many were armed, heightening political tensions in the town. Meanwhile, Perdomo led a march of 1,500 supporters through Cuernavaca's principal streets. The procession included mostly children from the town's public schools, government employees, hotel and restaurant employees, and workers from the electrician and highways unions.<sup>152</sup>

Then, at two thirty in the afternoon, a Gobernación agent relaxing in Jardín Morelos heard shots. The firing came from the direction of Perdomo's offices. Seven armed men had entered the governor-elect's headquarters and indiscriminately fired some

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<sup>148</sup> Born in Santa Rosa Treinta (Tlaltizapán), Marmolejo served as the head of the Morelos Liga from 1935 to 1938. His stewardship of the organization, however, did not endear him to the majority of Morelos's farmers and he won few of their votes in the 1938 election. AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 166, exp. 1, ff. 34-38, Report by Capriano Arriola, 22 February 1938.

<sup>149</sup> A native of Cuautla, Mejía was a nephew of Zapata, but he was said to have betrayed his uncle during the revolution. Mejía later settled in Cuautla and in 1934 led a corrupt effort to wrestle control of Anenecuilco's two best fields. Mejía had also become involved in the Morelos Liga, but he won few votes in the 1938 gubernatorial contest. Only in Cuautla and Jonacatepec could Mejía count on tepid support at best. AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 166, exp. 1, ff. 34-38, Report by Capriano Arriola, 22 February 1938.

<sup>150</sup> Originally from Tehuixtla (Jojutla), Neri served in the Chamber of Deputies from 1926 to 1928 and the Morelos state legislature from 1932 to 1935. In the 1934 PNR internal elections for governor, he won Yautepec, Amacuzac, Zacuapan, Xochitepec, and Puente de Ixtla. For a short biography of Neri, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1993* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 501.

<sup>151</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 166, exp. 1, ff. 287-294, "Elecciones de poderes locales de Morelos," 23 April 1938.

<sup>152</sup> AGN, Gobernación IPS, caja 166, exp. 1, ff. 336-342, Report by Inspector PS-2, 1 May 1938, ff. 347-349, Report by Inspector PS-12, 2 May 1938.

forty bullets at those unfortunate persons present in the office. One individual was killed instantly, while half a dozen lay injured. Troops stationed in Jardín Morelos quickly arrived at the scene to restore order and detained several individuals. Three of the suspects were federal deputies, including the representative from Morelos, Andrés Duarte, and Congressmen Atanasio Arrieta from Durango and Miguel Hidalgo Salazar from Puebla. They were accompanied by three or four gunmen from Mexico City.<sup>153</sup> The botched conspiracy gave the *perdomistas* the scope to act. On 4 May, the victorious state legislature was sworn in. Its first order of business was to oust Bustamante from the governorship with less than a dozen days remaining in his mandate. It was the final blow to *callismo* in Morelos. The mobilized farmers returned to the countryside and Perdomo assumed the governorship by mid-May.<sup>154</sup>

The defeat of the PNR's old guard in 1938 paved the way for a reorganization of the party in Morelos. At the national level, the party was also transforming. In March 1938, delegates met in Mexico City to reorganize the PNR and rename it the Party of the Mexican Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Mexicana), integrating state agrarian leagues into the party apparatus. By doing so, the institution grew into a nationwide party of the masses. Membership in the organization increased from 1,300,000 persons in 1934 to 4,305,000 in 1938—over half of whom were *campesinos*.<sup>155</sup> Back in Morelos,

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<sup>153</sup>At three thirty in the afternoon, Federal soldiers transferred the detained men to Cuernavaca's military headquarters. There, authorities questioned them in front of the Gobernación agent. Deputy Arrieta claimed he was in town on an official investigation of the two rival legislatures. He said he was eating in a restaurant in Hotel España and bolted out to the street after he heard shots. At that moment, a soldier apprehended Arrieta and confiscated his pistol. Deputy Salazar also stated that the Chamber of Deputies had commissioned him to investigate the political standoff in Morelos. He was sitting in an automobile in front of Cortés Palace, waiting for the governor to arrive, when he heard shots and dashed to see what had occurred. Both deputies considered their detention a violation of their "fuero." All the detained had similar alibis, and all appear to have been released from custody. AGN, Gobernación IPS, caja 166, exp. 1, ff. 336-342, Report by Inspector PS-2, 1 May 1938, ff. 347-349, Report by Inspector PS-12, 2 May 1938.

<sup>154</sup> AGN, Gobernación IPS, caja 166, exp. 1, ff. 355-358, Report by Inspector PS-2, 6 May 1938.

<sup>155</sup> Garrido, *El partido*, 255.

the countryside began to decompress politically after a period of growing tensions. President Cárdenas had not only curbed anticlericalism in village classrooms by this time, but he also oversaw more land redistribution in Morelos. Moreover, he revived the sugar economy in March of 1938 by inaugurating the giant sugar mill at Zacatepec.<sup>156</sup> Perhaps most noteworthy was the fact that former *zapatista* combatants won electoral victories in districts across the state. Five chiefs secured nearly every seat in the state legislature in 1938, cementing the political strength of Morelos's pueblos. Pioquinto Galis, Demetrio Gutiérrez, Quintín González, Miguel Zúñiga, and Nicolás Zapata were among the former *zapatistas* who won state legislative seats.<sup>157</sup> The victory of the revolutionary coalition in Morelos that year further enhanced the prestige and influence of the official party in rural areas. Finally, after Enrique Rodríguez surrendered and returned to civil life in September 1938, the pact between rural Morelos and Mexico City was reestablished.

Electoral victories, however, did not translate into political unity among the *zapatistas*. In many respects, Elpidio Perdomo's governorship represented the institutionalization of *zapatismo* after 1920. Originally from Tlalquiltenango, Perdomo had fought in the army against De la Huerta rebels in Guerrero in 1924. He was later stationed in northern Mexico and returned to Morelos in 1935, earning a spot as an alternate senator (*suplente*) in the national Congress. In the high-turnout election of 1938, Perdomo captured the votes of *ejidatarios* unhappy with the leadership of the Morelos Liga, but his later tendency to use a heavy hand when dealing with political enemies at the local level earned him the ire of numerous pueblos. By the end of 1938, Perdomo was himself accused of hiring gunmen to kill and intimidate political opponents

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<sup>156</sup> For a large file pertaining to the establishment of the mill and work and politics in the complex thereafter, see AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 545.3/268.

<sup>157</sup> For brief biographies of Morelos's state legislators from 1930 to 1980, see Valentín López González, *El poder legislativo en Morelos: 50 años de vida constitucional, 1930-1980: biografías de los diputados de la XXIV a La XLI Legislatura del Estado de Morelos* (Cuernavaca: Gobierno del Estado de Morelos, 1981).

in Cuautla, Yautepec, Yecapixtla, Jojutla, Jonacatepec, and other villages.<sup>158</sup> To make matters worse, in 1939, five revolutionaries in the state legislature accused Perdomo of overstepping his authority by meddling in the affairs of the judicial and legislative branches. Pioquinto Galis, Miguel Zúñiga, Demetrio Gutiérrez, Quintín González and Nicolás Zapata were subsequently expelled from the legislature after a standoff with Perdomo.<sup>159</sup> Perdomo's support in his home region around Jojutla and elsewhere then plummeted in the early 1940s, as his relationship with the sugar union's leader, Rubén Jaramillo, deteriorated until the farmer was provoked into revolt in 1942. Jaramillo's rebellion would carry the torch of *zapatismo* back into the hills and usher in a new era of politics in Morelos.<sup>160</sup>

By way of conclusion, it is important to highlight changes and continuities in Morelos politics during the tumultuous post-revolutionary period. One factor in the political equation remained constant: the state could not easily be governed without a significant degree of pueblo consent, as shown in the electoral chaos of the mid-1920s, the upheaval of the mid-1930s, and the 1938 post-election stand-off. This was, perhaps, the legacy of *zapatismo* in the politics of post-revolutionary Morelos. Indeed, pueblos counted more now than ever as the foundation for larger regional and national political coalitions.

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<sup>158</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 543.1/3, f. 7, V. Santos Guajardo to Perdomo, 12 December 1938.

<sup>159</sup> *La Prensa*, 3 May 1939; *El Universal*, 3 May 1939.

<sup>160</sup> For a recent treatment of the Jaramillo rebellion, see Padilla, *Rural Resistance*. In Spanish, see Aura Hernández Hernández, "El ingenio Emiliano Zapata de Zacatepec, el crisol jaramillista," in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8, 401-428; Aura Hernández Hernández, "Razón y muerte de Rubén Jaramillo. Violencia política y resistencia. Aspectos del movimiento jaramillista," in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8, 429-481; Renato Ravelo Lecuona, *Los jaramillistas* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1978); Plutarco García Jiménez, "El movimiento jaramillista: Una experiencia de lucha campesina y popular del periodo post-revolucionario en Mexico," in *Morelos: Cinco siglos*, 301-310.

The strength of the *pueblo* as both an idea—“the people”—and as a body of political communities explains why rule by consent stood at the center of post-revolutionary politics in rural Morelos. To be a member or representative of the “the people” meant to embody the popular will. *Zapatismo*, after all, placed emphasis on village cohesiveness as social units rather than as simply geographic entities, because a democratic and tight-knit people guarded against despotism.<sup>161</sup> In their political conflicts, locals frequently invoked the term “el pueblo” to mobilize a municipal electorate and emphasize village sovereignty, clean elections, and honest government. Take for instance the 1926 gubernatorial election in Puente de Ixtla. On election day, municipal authorities blatantly favored the official candidate and would not allow voters to cast ballots for the opposition. Villagers then took the initiative and mobilized explicitly in the name of the *pueblo*. A Gobernación secret agent reported what unfolded next:

The *pueblo en masse* took the determination to install an independent voting station... [and] to organize it in accordance with the law. I was convinced of the organizing force of the *campesinos* and the sensible and ordered labor of their candidate by the fact that everyone gathered at the independent voting station very respectfully showed their credential that testified to their residency, and they went on voting in complete order.<sup>162</sup>

Spontaneous creation of independent voting booths became a recurring way for villagers to bypass corrupt officials and ensure the electoral integrity of the community. The same thing happened during the 1938 elections for governor. In every municipal seat where the authorities favored one candidate over another, villagers were distrustful of official

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<sup>161</sup> Arturo Warman, “The Political Project of Zapatismo,” in *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico*, ed. Friedrich Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>162</sup> AGN, Gobernación IPS, caja 165, exp. 1, f. 221, Report by Agente Confidencial, 13 February 1926.

voting stations and set up their own booths to count the ballots.<sup>163</sup> Ubiquitous invocations of the *pueblo* such as these demonstrate how locals used the multidimensional concept as a way to defend and even enforce sovereignty. To varying degrees, each settlement in the countryside possessed the ability to mobilize the *pueblo* and to pursue popular causes, even if such cohesive behavior was often weakened by internal divisions and pernicious outside influences. Be they migrants from Guerrero or politicians from other states, membership in the Morelos “*pueblo*” was almost exclusively for *morelenses*, which explains why the nativist pulse in regional politics endured so strongly for two decades.

Change, on the other hand, could be seen in the relationship between rural Morelos and Mexico City. For example, President Obregón was reluctant to engage with the *pueblos*. His trip to Cuernavaca in March 1923 to shore up the Parres government, the transfer of De la O to a military post in Tlaxcala, and the lip service he paid to the agrarian cause was largely the extent of his involvement in Morelos, and none provided real solutions to region’s enduring problems. Calles, on the other hand, assumed the presidency and had to respond almost immediately to the electoral upheaval gripping the state in 1925-1926. One way he did so was by ousting Governor Velasco in 1925 after the massacre at Tetecala when village petitions poured into executive offices. Another way the *callistas* came to terms with the countryside was to appoint Ambrosio Puente to the governorship, who respected the outcomes of municipal elections. Vicente Estrada Cajigal’s election to the post in Cuernavaca in 1930 continued this practice, which helped expand the PNR’s reach into rural areas. Cárdenas, like the *callistas*, also actively responded to circumstances in Morelos by carrying out more land reform, curbing

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<sup>163</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, caja 75, exp. 18, ff. 79-86, Report by Capriano Arriola, 23 April 1938.

anticlericalism, cancelling the results of the low-turnout PNR primaries of 1937, and backing Perdomo in the 1938 electoral standoff. Throughout all these negotiations with different federal regimes, the rural polity in Morelos displayed an uncanny knack to cast its lot with the victorious coalition in national politics. In 1920 they had backed Obregón, and they then supported Calles four years later until it became apparent that Cárdenas would emerge triumphant in the national political struggle of the mid-1930s. Mexico City, meanwhile, had managed to retain support in the Morelos countryside because it had shared sovereignty with the pueblos in the 1920s and 1930s rather than impose its will on mobilized villages.



## Chapter II: Land Reform and Pueblo Revival

The agrarian reform of the 1920s and 1930s was a democratizing as well as centralizing force in the Morelos countryside, as villagers sought not just land and liberty from the federal government, but also political room to maneuver through newly established ejidal assemblies sanctioned by the National Agrarian Commission. Instituted by Carranza's 1915 Agrarian Law and CNA Circular #22, the assemblies consisted of local *comités ejecutivos* and *comités particulares administrativos* (executive and administrative committees). President Calles further elaborated on the responsibilities of the committees in a 1925 decree. Each year villagers elected members to the land committees to manage the community's natural resources. Functionally distinct, the executive committee handled the external affairs of the *ejido* and its relations with state and national bureaucrats, while the administrative committee managed the *ejido's* internal organization and plot assignments.<sup>164</sup> Over the course of the 1920s, these assemblies formed bridgeheads with the CNA for the pueblos to voice local grievances in presidential offices. The agrarian committees, in fact, became bastions of resistance against abusive state-level and municipal politicians and rural elites. Pueblos, in other words, gained power through the ejidal assemblies, which were subject to local control in Morelos. At the same time, rural inhabitants strategically manipulated the different levels of authority within the agrarian bureaucracy as leverage in local conflicts. This process enabled the Local and National Agrarian Commissions to perform legislative acts and

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<sup>164</sup> Manuel Fabila, ed., *Cinco siglos de legislación agraria (1493-1940)* (Mexico City: Banco de Crédito Agrícola, 1941), 320-321, 416-418.

function as a kind of judiciary in land-related matters, allowing Mexico City to usurp powers once exercised by the state and municipal governments. In the meantime, agronomists served as middle-men between elites and villagers, negotiating statistical representations and the ejidal boundaries of rural Morelos that further facilitated Mexico City's assertion of control over the countryside. Villagers thus actively used the agrarian bureaucracy to engage the state.<sup>165</sup> All told, from 1920 to 1929 over 208,000 hectares of lands were redistributed to the pueblos of Morelos. A second phase of the agrarian reform then followed in the mid-1930s under President Cárdenas, who doled out a further 69,000 hectares of lands in Morelos, thereby cementing the alliance between the villages and the federal government (see Appendix A).

Studies of the post-revolutionary ejidal assemblies, however, have tended to emphasize their role in empowering Mexico City at the expense of rural polities, while relegating any benefits these committees may have brought to villagers. Likewise, the federal government's preference for redistributing lands in the form of *dotación* (grant) instead of *restitución* (restitution) has been seen as proof of the center's political project to control the agrarian reform at the expense of the peasantry. In short, most works have focused on authoritarianism in the *ejidos* and the political project of national elites while

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<sup>165</sup> Baitenmann, "Popular Participation" and Michael A. Ervin, "The 1930 Agrarian Census in Mexico: Agronomists, Middle Politics, and the Negotiation of Data Collection," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2007): 537–570. Two well-known agronomists, Marte Gómez and Julio Cuadros Caldas, were employed in the Local Agrarian Commission in Cuernavaca during the agrarian reform and reported on the Morelos countryside. See Marte R. Gómez, *Los comisiones agrarias del sur* (México: M. Porrúa, 1961) and Guillermo Palacios, "Julio Cuadros Caldas: un agrarista colombiano en la revolución mexicana," *Historia Mexicana* 49, no. 3 (2000): 431–476.

ignoring what pueblos gained from such as relationship.<sup>166</sup> This chapter reappraises the role of the ejidal assemblies by arguing that the agrarian reform carried out in post-revolutionary Morelos was both a centralizing *and* a democratizing device, at least vis-à-vis local elites, and that rural communities were more politically pragmatic and willing to deal with Mexico City than scholars have previously assumed. The national regime offered the countryside a crucial ally against rural elites in Morelos who were in retreat but nonetheless hostile to agrarian reform. Communities anguished over the return of Porfirian landlords because most villages held only provisional titles to the soil in the 1920s, which explains the pueblo insistence on rapid land redistribution and a close alliance with the federal government mediated via the new ejidal assemblies.

This chapter first provides an analysis of the land petitions written by villagers in the early 1920s in order to capture the dispositions of the pueblos at the crucial juncture between revolution and reform. It argues that the legal distinction between *dotación* and *restitución* was of secondary importance to the majority of communities and that what mattered most to the villages was to secure control of the land in the form of definitive

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<sup>166</sup> Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Paul Friedrich, *The Princes of Naranja: An Essay in Anthrohistorical Method* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Everardo Escárcega and Carlota Botey, eds., *Historia de la cuestión agraria mexicana* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1988); Jean Meyer, "Los 'Kulaki' del ejido (los años '30)," *Relaciones* 8, no. 29 (1987): 23–43; Álvaro Ochoa, *Los agraristas de Atacheo* (Zamora: El Colegio Michoacán, 1989); Ann L. Craig, *The First Agraristas: An Oral History of a Mexican Agrarian Reform Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 90–91; Christopher R. Boyer, "Old Loves, New Loyalties: Agrarismo in Michoacán, 1920–1928," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (1998): 419–455; Christopher R. Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920–1935* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

title—the surest form of defense against vindictive landlords. A second section examines how the ejidal assemblies provided a counter weight to hostile smallholders, tenants on haciendas, and former *hacendados* who sought to control the town councils. The politics of deforestation, the subject of the third section, further explores this theme by showing how the nationally-sanctioned agrarian committees were used to battle municipal authorities and private landowners who exploited the forest resources at will. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section devoted to the village petitions that prompted President Cárdenas to carry out a second agrarian reform in Morelos during the 1930s.

### ***Land Petitions***

The land petitions of the early 1920s capture the outlook of the pueblos at this crucial juncture between revolution and official reform and their desire to engage with Mexico City via the ejidal assemblies against local elites. In July 1920, the Local Agrarian Commission, headquartered in Cuernavaca, circulated the procedures for communities to follow in order to obtain lands and waters.<sup>167</sup> Villagers expressed claims to the soil by recalling the events surrounding the despoilment of their natural resources, sometimes going back hundreds of years. The residents of Ocuituco, for example, reclaimed waters

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<sup>167</sup> First, villages had to petition the governor and state whether they sought a simple grant or a restitution that recognized their previously held rights to the land. The governor then passed the petition along to the CLA, which appointed an inspector and engineers to go to the village and gather local census data, classify the types of lands surrounding the community, and note climatic characteristics. The CLA studied the reports, arrived at a decision, and sent the file to the governor for final approval. The governor then signed a provisional resolution in the form of a grant or restitution (or a denial of either) and notified the executive Committee of the petitioning village. The CLA then sent the file to the National Agrarian Commission, where agrarian bureaucrats further studied the matter and finally directed the file to the president's office for a signature to provide a definitive presidential resolution. Once signed by the president, the case closed. If a village sought more land, they had to proceed with a request for extension (*ampliación*). AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 744, leg. 9, "Bases que se observaran para restituir y dotar ejidos a los pueblos del Estado de Morelos," 25 July 1920; AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 745, leg. 8, Document by President of CLA, 9 November 1920.

given to the community in 1608 colonial land documents.<sup>168</sup> The rancho of Huatecalco (Tlaltizapán) traced the loss of its lands to 1843, when a parish priest tried to sell the inhabitants' small plots. Ten years later, the Amilpa hacienda controlled the disputed fields.<sup>169</sup> Meanwhile, Huitzilac, a northern village bordering the Federal District, remembered losing a strip of mountainous terrain in 1904. The piece of land in question had belonged to the pueblo "since times immemorial," a common phrase used by villagers but one that should not be interpreted literally. At the time of Huitzilac's despoilment, however, residents did not even issue a formal complaint because of "the state we found ourselves in. As is well known...in those times of the dictatorship, raising a voice against an abuse was enough to be immediately persecuted."<sup>170</sup> This Manichean language of a black and white world dividing village and hacienda was a hallmark of the political language of *zapatismo*. Dozens of rural communities could recall generations of land transactions and name the individuals involved, the exact year of a dispute, and the outcome of litigation. They employed the same events and memories that once justified rural rebellion to now reclaim their historic right to the land.

Recollections of abusive landlords and the experiences of the Porfiriato indeed remained fresh and bitter. Take for instance Santa Maria, which recounted its relationship with the Temixco hacienda going back to 1870:

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<sup>168</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 740, leg. 4, Review of Ocuituco's file by Genis Baron, 1 September 1926.

<sup>169</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 742, leg. 1, Juan M. Rodríguez to CLA, 21 February 1920.

<sup>170</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 745, leg. 6, Felipe Hinojosa to Parres, 21 October 1922.

It was the said estate that invariably extorted the residents of this pueblo to the degree that that it repeatedly exercised revenge against our Representatives and persons who had the boldness to claim the just rights of the pueblo. We even remember six residents of Santa María who were deported to Quintana Roo just for assuming the representation of the population...Eighteen years after such a fatal incident, we have had no news of them despite having vigorously inquired about their whereabouts.<sup>171</sup>

Horrific memories of hacienda authorities abducting relatives and neighbors and banishing them to the notorious labor camps of the Yucatán peninsula fed a constant fear that the *hacendados* would return to power in the 1920s. The widespread belief that landlords could make a comeback in post-revolutionary Morelos, coupled with the militarization of the land question, in significant measure explains why the federal government found a bastion of support in the state. The Sonoran regime and villagers both possessed a mutual enemy in the scions of Porfirian Morelos. By recalling past injustices, then, the early land petitions opened the door to a tacit alliance between peasants and national elites, as Cuernavaca and Mexico City overwhelmingly sided with the pueblos in disputes with estate owners who sought to recover lost lands during the 1920s.

The CLA ordered petitioners to include data from the *títulos primordiales* (colonial land deeds) as the basis for all restitution claims. These *títulos* contained the origins of village collective memories, as the Spanish Crown, through these documents, established the pueblo's right to land. Where they existed the thick files demarcated a community's boundaries in writing, pictures, and maps and sanctioned the possession of

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<sup>171</sup> AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Santa María Ahuacatitlan (Cuernavaca), exp. 24/10485, ff. 70-72, Residents of Santa María to the CLA, 28 May 1923.

land. Most communities went to extraordinary lengths to keep these papers safe. When Zapata was asked why he was fighting, he famously brandished a bundle of copied village land titles of Anenecuilco.<sup>172</sup>

Using colonial deeds as the basis of their claims, nearly every community in Morelos petitioned for “restitution” of their natural resources, but only one percent of the redistributed lands were ever delivered in the form of restitution. Practically all pueblos, instead, took control of the soil in the form of *dotación*, or grant. Scholars often take the federal government’s preference for grants over restitutions to emphasize the political project of elites.<sup>173</sup> That is, the post-revolutionary order would not recognize the previously held rights of the pueblos but rather created a system whereby the state bestowed usufructuary rights upon a rural population. By doing so, according to this orthodox interpretation, the state, not the village, was the ultimate decider in who controlled which lands. And for the villages, restitution equaled justice, whereas a grant was interpreted as an insult.<sup>174</sup> While perhaps the preference for *dotación* was tinged with political considerations, few works have produced actual cases of a pueblo’s response to receiving a grant, rather than restitution. How did a rural community that had safeguarded ancient documents interpret the discarding of its historic right to surrounding lands?

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<sup>172</sup> For a chapter on the origins of the *títulos primordiales*, see Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th-18th Centuries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 98-145.

<sup>173</sup> Warman, *We Come to Object*, 136; Padilla, *Rural Resistance*, 41; Nugent, *Spent Cartridges*, 90-91.

<sup>174</sup> Baitenmann, “Popular Participation,” 6-7 has disputed the notion that “restitution” was a *carrancista* design to limit land reform and shown that villagers were quite pragmatic in regards to restitution versus grant.

The evidence in fact suggests that for most pueblos the all-important distinction between grant and restitution has been exaggerated. Only a few villages, as it turns out, actually went to the extraordinary lengths needed to provide the sufficient documentation to earn a restitution of land; most pueblos accepted the grants without quibbles. That is to say that ancient parchments secured a political rather than a strictly historical claim to the land. The legal distinction was undoubtedly important to the government, but the villages learned to accept dependency on Mexico City in exchange for backing in disputes with local elites. The few pueblos that did demand restitution over a grant included the cradles of the revolution—Anenecuilco (home of the Zapatas) and Santa María (De la O's birthplace). Each of these small communities staked an aggressive claim to natural resources surrounding the villages and sought recognition of their previously held rights to the land. Each also displayed more unity and cohesiveness during the 1920s than did other more divided communities. Anenecuilco, for example, was one of the first villages to receive land in October 1920, but it could not furnish sufficient documentation to prove that the neighboring haciendas of Coahuixtla, Hospital, and Tenextepango had usurped its territory.<sup>175</sup> Two-and-a-half years later, residents from Anenecuilco wrote to the authorities stating they now had the documents necessary to prove past despoilments. The residents clamored for restitution before a presidential resolution issued them a grant. "We testify before this court...that the pueblo of Anenecuilco is the cradle of the revolution, the principal foundation to restitute and grant

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<sup>175</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 740, leg. 7, Act signed by M.G. Jiménez, 28 September 1920.



[lands to] pueblos.”<sup>176</sup> If Zapata’s home village could not earn restitution, they asserted, then who could? In 1927, Anenecuilco’s leaders presented their *títulos primordiales* before the agrarian authorities demonstrating the community’s ownership of the fertile Nopal and Zacuaco fields.<sup>177</sup> Villagers then wrote to De la O, in distant Tlaxcala, urging him to use his influence to help their case; yet the government was still not convinced by the pueblo’s claims. Two years later, indeed President Emilio Portes Gil signed Anenecuilco’s presidential land grant (*dotación*). Anenecuilco did not even receive an extension of its provisional grant either, leaving the pueblo to conclude “that we are not agreement with these dispositions” of the National Agrarian Commission.<sup>178</sup> The case closed, temporarily at least until the mid-1930s.

Another rare instance of dispute over the form of land redistribution occurred in Santa María, where the pueblo’s inhabitants placed paramount importance on earning recognition of the village’s historic rights. Pueblo leaders spent several years in the 1920s searching in the national archives in Mexico City for the required documents to obtain restitution. Their quest delayed official reform. In 1933, Santa María remained the only pueblo in Morelos without a definitive resolution;<sup>179</sup> only a year earlier the community had belatedly received a provisional restitution of 5,271 hectares of lands

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<sup>176</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Anenecuilco (Ayala), exp. 23/2961, leg. 1, f. 98, Secretario General transcription to CNA, 2 February 1923.

<sup>177</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Anenecuilco (Ayala), exp. 23/2961, leg. 1, f. 258, Francisco Franco to CNA, 25 April 1929.

<sup>178</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Anenecuilco (Ayala), exp. 23/2961, leg. 1, f. 301, De la O to Portes Gil, 23 September 1921.

<sup>179</sup> AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Santa María Ahuacatitlan (Cuernavaca), exp. 24/10485, leg. 5, ff.83-84, Jorge Rojano to CNA, 10 February 1934.

(mostly wooded hillsides) from the Temixco hacienda.<sup>180</sup> When Santa María's case moved to a conclusion in federal executive offices that November, however, villagers rejected the presidential resolution, "refusing to sign any document related to the said possessions," reported a CNA representative.<sup>181</sup> Santa María sought more woodland, even though the government was willing to acknowledge its dispossession at the hands of the Temixco hacienda during the Porfiriato. Jorge Rojano of the CNA studied the case for several years and wrote in 1934 that the presidential resolution of 1929 "had not been executed due to village residents opposing it and believing that it did not satisfy their desires, since they demand more surface area."<sup>182</sup> He blamed their stubbornness on *caciques*, who rallied the inhabitants against the resolution handed down by the president. When, and if, Santa María finally resolved its land claims remains unclear, but the case, like that of Anenecuilco, represents an internally cohesive community demanding recognition of the community's historic rights and staking an aggressive claim to a large amount of natural resources.<sup>183</sup> These unique pueblos were strong enough to stare down the state over legal distinctions that most villages were pragmatic about but not strong enough to get what they deserved, or not all at once.

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<sup>180</sup> AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Santa María Ahuacatitlan (Cuernavaca), exp. 24/10485, leg. 4, ff. 230-232, Provisional Land Grant, 25 September 1929.

<sup>181</sup> AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Santa María Ahuacatitlan (Cuernavaca), exp. 24/10485, leg. 5, f. 64, Jorge Rojano to CNA, 31 December 1929.

<sup>182</sup> AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Santa María Ahuacatitlan (Cuernavaca), exp. 24/10485, leg. 5, f. 83, Jorge Rojano to Departamento Agrario, 10 February 1934.

<sup>183</sup> A third and final case where a village vigorously pursued restitution is Atlatlahucan, a pre-Hispanic village north of Cuautla and home to over 1,300 agricultural workers. AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Atlatlahucan (Atlatlahucan), exp. 23/3008, leg. 2, ff. 237, 238, Report by Pedro Augusto González, 31 January 1925; ff. 270-273, 421-425, Provisional & Definitive Resolutions, 10 April 1922 and 7 April 1927.

Given the fact that Genovevo de la O was the military commander of Morelos from 1920 to 1924, it is not surprising that Santa María was one of the most powerful pueblos in Morelos at this time. Santa María was home to a well-armed militia and had ambitions to control a huge swath of the Ajusco Mountains at the expense of smaller and weaker neighbors, and their aspirations reignited an old conflict with neighboring Huitzilac.<sup>184</sup> Both villages, reported the Local Agrarian Commission, were mobilized and ready to “resolve the subject with arms in hand,” because Santa María sought “an enormous extension of wooded lands in the Ajusco for no less 12 *sitios de ganado*” in the area surrounding Huitzilac. Such antagonisms were made all the more bitter given that Santa María and Huitzilac had violently disputed these lands a decade before, when De la O ordered the chief of Huitzilac, Francisco Pacheco, to be shot after he defected from the *zapatistas*.<sup>185</sup> What unfolded in 1920s Morelos, then, reflects to a degree what occurs in all triumphant revolutions: the victorious insurgents had defeated and expelled the old rulers from the scene and they now turned on each other in a struggle for the spots. Command over Morelos’s lands, waters, and forests drove this competition.

Santa María’s strong preference for restitution brought the pueblo into conflicts with communities across the northwestern region since it would confer rights of a primordial kind over lands that were simultaneously claimed by other, newer, villages. For Santa María, rights based on history and law trumped the rights of others based on need. Take the tiny hamlet of Buena Vista del Monte. In 1921, the pueblo described

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<sup>184</sup> AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Santa María Ahuacatitlan (Cuernavaca), exp. 24/10485, leg. 5, f. 2, “Asuntos importantes de Morelos,” not dated.

<sup>185</sup> Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata*, 187-189.

Santa María as “expansionist and absorbent.”<sup>186</sup> Three years later, when the CNA commissioned agents to visit Buena Vista in order to consider the pueblo’s land petition, delegates found the hamlet unpopulated and the houses destroyed.<sup>187</sup> “It is not remote to suppose,” wrote a delegate of the CNA, “that the residents of Buenavista have been throw out of their homes by means of force, since almost all the residents of Santa María were armed and formed part of the forces of General Genovevo de la O, who supports them in their violent acts towards other pueblos.”<sup>188</sup> Residents of the hamlet fled to neighboring communities, where they found access to ejidal parcels; they would not return to Buena Vista del Monte to repopulate the settlement until eight years later. Santa María’s aggressions, in fact, led the pueblo to quarrel with San Antón, Cuentepec, Tlaltenango, and Tetela—nearly every village in the highlands northwest of Cuernavaca. The CLA reported in 1921 that the “the conditions that the nearby pueblos [to Santa María] have been put in are well known by the Executive of the State.”<sup>189</sup> This all fit De la O’s personalist style of dealing with friend and foe alike, and there was little Cuernavaca could do to protect the weaker villages.

Several factors explain Santa María’s bellicose behavior during these years. The pueblo possessed fresh and bitter memories of conflicts with the Temixco hacienda during the Porfiriato, when raising protests against the *hacendado* could result in

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<sup>186</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Buena Vista del Monte (Cuernavaca), exp. 23/3006, leg. 1, f. 10, Illegible to CLA, 18 November 1921.

<sup>187</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Buena Vista del Monte (Cuernavaca), exp. 23/3006, leg. 1, ff. 29-30, Pedro Agosto González to CLA, 25 March 1925.

<sup>188</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Buena Vista del Monte (Cuernavaca), exp. 23/3006, leg. 1, f. 42, Report by Carlos Soto, 20 June 1925.

<sup>189</sup> AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Santa María Ahuacatitlan (Cuernavaca), exp. 24/10485, leg. 1, f. 11, CLA to Sería. General de Gobierno, 26 December 1921.

banishment to the Yucatán and a life of hard labor. During the revolution, the location of the village in the highlands between Mexico and Cuernavaca made it a strategic point in the military campaigns, where De la O's forces formed a first line of defense against invading armies. The federal army knew this and burned Santa María to the ground during the war. As a result, the pueblo's inhabitants had learned to stick together in order to survive, and its high degree of martial spirit allowed it to pursue ambitious territorial claims. That De la O possessed access to arms as chief of military operation of Morelos only increased Santa María's ability to pursue its agrarian interests effectively. Unusually, the village did not rely on links to the central state (its CNA files are thin) and displayed a kind of primitive agrarianism based on traditional chieftainship and militarism. All told, Santa María was the most Spartan-like pueblo in all post-revolutionary Morelos, carving out a living in the woods and ready to defend its territory with arms.

To be sure, Santa María and Anenecuilco represent exceptions to the rule in regards to whether a land grant rather than restitution offended local interest, but in all cases it was the ejidal assemblies who endorsed the process by fine-tuning the land petitions and voting on which government initiatives to accept. Even though a majority of pueblos applied for restitution, most accepted a grant without protest and did not pursue lengthy and expensive quests for colonial and nineteenth-century land titles that might or might not qualify for restitution. For the villages, the *dotaciones* were sufficient enough, because, above all, they gained control of the soils and now possessed a formal channel to raise a voice in Mexico City through the ejidal assemblies. A *dotación*, then,

did not necessarily diminish the meaning of a pueblo's past struggles and previous ownership of land. Rather, it was a fast track to resolving the murkiness surrounding hundreds of years of land transactions. By accepting grants and not protesting the lack of restitutions, the pueblos demonstrated that they had adapted their ideas, language, and philosophical understanding of the agrarian reform to the legal and political framework of the 1920s and 1930s. What counted most for the vast majority of the communities was immediate control and access to surrounding natural resources—in any legal form. In this regard, it meant more to a village that the government sent official representatives to attend the solemn ceremonies that accompanied the deliverance of lands to a pueblo than did any distinction between legal categories. Official attendance at land ceremonies was really how elites recognized pueblo rights. This is why, fifty years after the agrarian reform, the oldest inhabitants of Jiutepec fondly remembered the exact day when President Obregón stopped in to deliver the pueblo's provisional grant. Apparently, memories of any quibble over restitution or grant had long faded.<sup>190</sup>

Adding to the predominance of grants in the redistribution process was the fact that the tumults of the revolution simply made it difficult to locate old documents, as many municipal archives, such as Cuautla, had burned during the fighting of the 1910s.<sup>191</sup> In other cases, disputes arose between villagers over possession of old land titles. For instance, at the end of the nineteenth century, the residents of Yecapixtla sent a delegation to the Archivo General de la Nación to obtain a legal copy of their colonial

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<sup>190</sup> Stefan Krotz Heberle, "Cooperar y compartir: Antropología política de una asociación de arroceros en Morelos" (Master's thesis, Universidad Iberoamericana, 1976), 24.

<sup>191</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Otilio Montaña (Cuautla), exp. 23/2966, leg. 1, f. 32, Vicente Vértiz to CLA, 4 April 1921. De la Peña, *A Legacy of Promises*, 84 has also noted this observation.

land deeds. They entrusted the documents to one Juan Álvarez, “who religiously conserved them until his death” and salvaged them during the upheaval of the revolution. In the 1920s, however, Juan Álvarez’s son, Isidoro, came to possess the documents and refused to hand them over for inclusion in the pueblo’s petition for restitution.<sup>192</sup> Thus, between vague colonial deeds, lost documents, conflicts over possession of land titles, and general confusion over pueblo boundaries, various obstacles forced most villages to receive a grant rather than earn restitution.

Perhaps even more than the pueblos, Porfirian landlords had a stake in the distinction between grants and restitutions. Restitution officially proved that an estate owner had illegally taken lands from a pueblo. Luis García Pimentel Jr., the inheritor of the eastern haciendas of Santa Clara and Tenango, wrote to authorities that Jantetelco’s claim of possessing colonial land deeds from 1689 did not matter; he had documents from 1616 to show he was the legitimate owner. “In addition, my father and his ancestors have not despoiled any sort of lands belonging to the pueblos,” García Pimentel asserted.<sup>193</sup> Assertions such as these further muddled the waters of land claims in rural Morelos and presented another obstacle to pueblos seeking restitution. Yet rather than interpreting these cases as evidence of a central state bent on usurping prior village rights in order to establish new political authority over the pueblos, they suggests that decades of conflict in the Morelos countryside—whereby control of land continuously changed hands—meant that establishing clear historical ownership of a given territory was a near-

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<sup>192</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 745, leg.5, Benito Álvarez to Parres, 15 March 1922.

<sup>193</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Jantetelco (Jantetelco), exp. 23/3028, leg. 1, f. 45, Luis Garcia Pimentel Jr. to Parres, 30 April 1921.

impossible task; hence, the CNA's preference for a *dotación* rather than restitution. For the pueblos, too, a grant accepted was an expedient but sufficient solution to heated legal battles involving hostile smallholders and former landlords. Yecapixtla in 1923, for instance, demanded that the Local Agrarian Commission execute its provisional land grant as soon as possible, because the pueblo found itself "in difficult circumstances" with locals renting private lands and nearby pueblos gaining titles to their *ejidos*.<sup>194</sup>

Similar to issues of grant or restitution, historians often point to the federal government's unwillingness to take into account the 1915 *zapatista* agrarian reform as evidence that official *agrarismo* was a political project imposed to control the peasantry. Warman even goes as far as to contend that since the land reform of 1915 was carried out free of central governmental tutelage, it constituted an act of banditry under the new rules of the game.<sup>195</sup> This assertion needs questioning. How, if at all, did the pueblos refer to the *zapatista* land reform in the petitions of the early 1920s? Is there any evidence to suggest that villagers considered the *zapatista* agrarian reform more legitimate than the redistribution of the 1920s? In the petitions of post-revolutionary Morelos, there are few actual references to the land reform of 1915. When the land-hungry provided the legal foundation for their petition, they knew they had to cite the agrarian decree of January 1915 issued by Carranza, which had created the National Agrarian Commission. By doing so, villagers showed they were willing to play by the rules of the post-

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<sup>194</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Yecapixtla (Yecapixtla), exp. 23/3060, f. 199, Alfonso María Figueroa to CLA, 13 June 1923.

<sup>195</sup> Warman, *We Come to Object*, 136.



revolutionary state and accept the new social order.<sup>196</sup> Only the case of Tlaltizapán, the former headquarters of *zapatismo*, presents a situation whereby villagers cited the 1915 agrarian reform and sought the restitution of the lands received under that law. Yet the Local Agrarian Commission made it clear that documents from the 1915 *zapatista* land reform could not be used as legitimate proof of prior possession.<sup>197</sup> Villages could only prove despoilment with documents that predated the revolution. Tellingly, Tlaltizapán does not appear to have protested the decision and received its presidential resolution a year later in 1926. In other instances, the land petitions cited the redistribution of 1915 as just another point of reference to further justify longstanding claims to specific fields. Such was the case of Tlalquilténango's petition, which included a document and map from 1915. The residents of Tlalquilténango made it clear, however, that they did not seek restitution, but rather a quick and simple grant that included plentiful pastures for their numerous livestock to graze.<sup>198</sup> Most likely, then, if the *ejido* was a good size it already contained the lands given to the pueblo by Zapata; hence villagers had little reason to protest.

Although depopulated and many cases demolished, pueblos across Morelos showed through the land petitions of the 1920s that they still possessed the seam that bound together life in the countryside—the collective memory of the village and a commitment to own land and farm as a pueblo. Still, by no means were these

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<sup>196</sup> Armando Bartra, *Los herederos de Zapata: Movimientos campesinos posrevolucionarios en México, 1920-1980* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1985), 23.

<sup>197</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tlaltizapán (Tlaltizapán), exp. 23/3040, leg. 1, f. 152, Report by Heuberte Felera, 19 August 1925.

<sup>198</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tlalquilténango (Tlalquilténango), exp. 23/3078, leg. 1, ff. 3-4, Calixto López to Parres, 23 September 1920. For the 1915 map and document, see folios 18 and 20-21.

communities solely anchored to the past. The majority of villages sought formal and immediate control of land rather than nitpicking legal distinctions between grant and restitution. Jurisdiction over land provided the surest way to counter intrigues of the Porfirian landlords, who villagers still perceived as a threat in the countryside. For those migrants who returned to their homes in the countryside, a new era had arrived in which peasants could use outside individuals and institutions to advance their interests. The pueblos, in sum, were reconstituted in dialogue with the revolutionary laws.

### ***Ejidal Assemblies and Municipal Governments***

Post-revolutionary ejidal assemblies formed the institutional basis of rural state-building in Morelos. At the beginning of each year, villagers elected new representatives to serve as the executive president, the administrative president, secretaries, and board members (*vocales*). The executive assembly was the legal representative of the *ejido* and managed land petitions, while the administrative committee assigned specific plots for villagers to work. All assembly members were required to be local *ejidatarios* that held no other public office. Before a pueblo received provisional titles from the Local Agrarian Commission, *campesinos* elected the committee members to receive the village's grant. Such was the case in Villa de Ayala, when on 27 September 1920 the inhabitants elected six members to the ejidal assemblies; a day later the community received its provisional titles from Governor Parres.<sup>199</sup> The state governor or the president of the Local Agrarian Commission signed off on these elections and noted

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<sup>199</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Ayala (Villa de Ayala), exp. 23/2960, Signed by Rafael Molina and Rafael Cortez, 27 September 1920.

specifically the names of the new executive committee president, who represented the pueblo before the agrarian bureaucracy.<sup>200</sup> Excluding the mid-1920s, there is little evidence to suggest that state governors or the Local Agrarian Commission intervened in or opposed the outcomes of these contests, even though Calles decreed in 1926 that the CNA had the legal right to call new ejidal elections if the administrative committee “badly managed” the *ejido*’s wealth.<sup>201</sup> Ejidal elections, therefore, were controlled by local actors in Morelos and outside agencies merely notified of the results.

The growing involvement of Mexico City in rural affairs under President Calles in the mid-1920s added a new component to ejidal struggles, just as it did in the waging of electoral battles with Cuernavaca, when the federal government became an ally of *morelense* villages. Inside the pueblos, too, conflicts beset the politics of the agrarian reform. The electoral upheaval of mid-1920s Morelos between the state and municipal governments, for instance, was paralleled by similarly heated conflicts between ejidal and municipal councils over the rights to exploit village natural resources. Given the *ejido*’s direct links to the National Agrarian Commission and state governors’ propensity to impose unelected town councils (*consejos municipales*) during the mid-1920s, it is probably not surprising that these institutions clashed over the rights to administer local natural resources. Simply put, these conflicts pitted Cuernavaca and its appointed *consejos municipales* made up of the local elite, against Mexico City and the elected ejidal assemblies made up of local *agraristas*. Power remained diffused among the

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<sup>200</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, San José Vista Hermosa (Puente de Ixtla), exp. 23/3085, leg. 1, f. 17, document signed by Carlos Peralta, 7 April 1921.

<sup>201</sup> Fabila, *Cinco siglos*, 417.

various competing factions at the ground level, but with the execution of the definitive land resolutions under Calles the ejidal committees and the national government were emerging triumphant in this struggle, thereby weakening the municipal and state governments in favor of both federal and local authority.

Who exactly made up the local elite and how did they challenge the agrarian reform? Briefly exploring these questions sheds light on why the Morelos peasantry sought a rapid land reform and how the ejidal assemblies defended pueblo sovereignty. Although they abandoned their properties after 1914, during the brief months between late-1919 and the beginning of the agrarian reform the following fall, the sugar planters began to make a comeback in rural Morelos. As the revolutionary fighting waned, landlords deployed agents on their behalf to the countryside to revamp their haciendas. These tenants, known as *arrendatarios*, lived close by the burned out buildings of the haciendas and quickly arranged contracts to lease lands to destitute *campesinos* surviving in the villages. It should be noted that the *arrendatarios* of 1920s Morelos represented *hacendado* interests in the countryside and were not themselves tenant farmers, which is the most common meaning of the term. In December 1920, for example, an engineer from the CNA visited Puente de Ixtla and reported that the impoverished inhabitants “were forced to accept the land-leasing agreements of the haciendas [and] atrocious conditions that no man who prides himself on freedom can approve.”<sup>202</sup> Old land arrangements between villagers and landlords thus began to resurface across Morelos

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<sup>202</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Puente de Ixtla (Punete de Ixtla), exp. 23/2958, leg. 1, f. 21, David Manjarrez to Regino Guzmán, 2 December 1920.

after Zapata's death.<sup>203</sup> We saw how in the eastern municipal seats of Tetecala and Puente de Ixtla land grabs by the *hacendado* Emmanuel Amor contributed to local tensions and instability, but in eastern Morelos, too, the sons of Luis García Pimentel made life difficult for *agraristas* in the region by seeking injunctions against provisional land grants and fielding white guards to intimidate peasants in the region.<sup>204</sup> The landlords of Porfirian Morelos were not the only enemies of the *ejidos*, however. Smallholders and private commercial interests in most municipal seats were also hostile to the agrarian reform. Many of these individuals' fortunes could be traced back to the Porfiriato, when a few families within the pueblos accumulated resources by controlling local exports, such as fruits in the case of Coatlán del Río, pulque in Huitzilac, and meat in Yecapixtla. They owned urban land, buildings, and small private agricultural plots. The little capital they accumulated allowed them to loan money at exorbitant rates. The wealthiest of these *comerciantes*, as they were known in the villages, could speculate and corner local markets of peasant production. Many of them were also of Spanish descent.<sup>205</sup> And it was these individuals who clung to the municipal governments in opposition to the ejidal assemblies.

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<sup>203</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Jantetelco (Jantetelco), exp. 23/3029, leg. 1, f. 9, Report by G. de la Cerda, 9 April 1921; AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Axochiapan (Axochiapan), exp. 23/3072, leg. 1, f. 93, Report by Gabriel de la Cerda, 22 April 1921.

<sup>204</sup> Emmanuel Amor was the proprietor of the San Gabriel and Actopan haciendas. The San Gabriel de la Palmas hacienda possessed over 31,000 hectares of lands in 1910. By 1927, however, the estate had lost over half its property to surrounding pueblos and would undergo further expropriation in the 1930s. González Herrera and Embriz Osorio, "La reforma agraria y la desaparición del latifundio en el estado de Morelos," in *Morelos: Cinco Siglos*, 291, 297.

<sup>205</sup> Horacio Crespo and Herbert Frey, "La diferenciación social del campesinado como problema de la teoría y de la historia, hipótesis generales para el caso de Morelos, México," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 44, no. 1 (1982): 285-313.

As early as 1920, the battle lines were drawn in Villa de Ayala. After Villa de Ayala received its provisional land grant in October conflict brewed with the municipal president Feliciano Domínguez. The leader of the *ejido*'s administrative committee, Rafael Cortéz, protested to authorities in the Local Agrarian Commission that Feliciano arbitrarily distributed ejidal lands to his close acquaintances from Temoac. According to the local *agraristas*, the municipal president was little more than a cacique: "and if anything delays ejidal work it is the lack of support of *Señor Presidente* [Feliciano], as this *Señor* is an ambitious financier. He has his own field of 70 *tareas*, 30 of those are not even cultivated, and yet he still wants more lands."<sup>206</sup> A CLA representative intervened on the ejidal committee's behalf by speaking personally with Feliciano, who promised not to meddle in agrarian matters. Apparently, this resolved the issue, because the *agraristas* in Villa de Ayala raised no further complaints regarding the pueblo's municipal authorities. In any case, the *ejidatarios* learned early on they could count on the backing of national institutions in local agrarian conflicts.

Other cases, however, were not resolved so easily. Consider Cuautla, which also lay in the heart of *zapatista* country. In 1922, nearly five hundred individuals worked the town's *ejido* of roughly 3,000 hectares, half of which was supposed to be irrigated land. Serafín Robles, a former worker in sugar mills at the Tenango and Sana Clara haciendas, and later a close confidant of Zapata, headed the Cuautla *ejido*. There, Robles's soldiers worked two hundred hectares as a military colony. Robles and Manuel Contreras, who

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<sup>206</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Villa de Ayala (Ayala), exp. 23/2960, leg. 1, f. 33, M.M. Hernández transcription to CLA, 7 February 1921.

headed the local agrarian committees, believed the municipal government had no right to intervene in ejidal affairs, and so refused to cooperate with the civil authorities. “These individuals,” reported a CNA representative,

boasted of not obeying or respecting any authority, justifying their behavior by virtue of having been *zapatista* revolutionaries and on the circumstance of almost always being armed. For these same reasons they believe they are authorized to rule the ejido as they please.<sup>207</sup>

Recall that Governor Velasco of the National Agrarian Party had imposed practically every town council in Morelos in 1925, the same year that the above document was written. These unelected officials, for the most part, were not revolutionary veterans, but rather civilians loyal to the governor. Ejidal assemblies, by contrast, largely consisted of elected individuals with *agrarista* credentials. Thus, for Serafín Robles and countless other agrarian leaders, unelected municipal authorities without a revolutionary past were to be resisted when they tried to control ejidal affairs. Conflicts such as that which occurred in Cuautla were common in all of Morelos, demonstrating how serious the question of rights to administer the region’s natural resources had become in the mid-1920s.

The ejidal assemblies were in fact counterweights to the illegitimately imposed town councils of the 1920s. In 1927, for example, the agrarian committees in Jumiltepec battled the pueblo’s non-elected village officer (*ayudante municipal*) who was appointed by the municipal president of Ocuituco. The difficulties, reported a CNA agent, “come from the unlawful intervention of the Ayudante Municipal in matters that are only of the

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<sup>207</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Cuautla (Cuautla), exp. 23/2971, leg. 2, f. 21, Report by Ignacio Ochoa, 24 April 1925.

Agrarian Committee as the legal administrator of the ejido.” It turns out that the local civil authority had colluded with smallholders in the pueblo to openly exploit the woodlands of the *ejido*, selling firewood and making a profit. Jumiltepec’s agrarian leaders retained control of the ejidal administration, but “the cited Ayudante does not ease up in his exploitation of the said *montes*, and in addition he tries to extort the Committee, erecting all types of obstacles.” The CNA bureaucrat exclaimed that in order to resolve the disputes Jumiltepec required a presidential resolution as soon as possible because, he believed, everyone must submit to executive authority.<sup>208</sup> A signature by Calles, the CNA asserted, would close the case and give the ejidal assemblies presidential backing to hold dominion over the wooded hillsides. Yet while the municipal officer who meddled in Jumiltepec’s agrarian affairs soon left office after his term expired, for unknown reasons the pueblo had to wait two years until it got its presidential signature in 1929. In any case, events in Jumiltepec reveal that both the pueblos and CNA saw the need for *callista* backing in conflicts with local elites as much as the national regime needed support from the *morelense* peasantry.

On other occasions, however, not even agrarian bureaucrats abided by the new rules. In the western municipal seat of Miacatlán, numerous forces collided in the 1920s to create deep divisions within the village. The municipal president, Francisco Beltrán, led a small group of livestock-raisers and disobeyed orders given by the ejidal committee to stop cutting and selling firewood from the nearby woodlands. The group even sought

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<sup>208</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Xochitlán (Yecapixtla), exp. 23/3054, leg. 7, f. 97, Manuel Contreras to Procurador de Pueblos, 31 January 1927.



to convert ejidal lands into pastures for grazing livestock. Beltrán meddled in all agrarian matters, a CNA agent communicated, even permitting residents to plant small parcels of rice in urban garden plots, which jeopardized public health.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, the civil authority controlled one hundred and fifty hectares of good lands, including rice paddies and urban properties; and Beltrán was openly hostile to peasants: “for the most insignificant thing he orders them to be beaten and put in jail.”<sup>210</sup> The pueblo of Miacatlán blamed the lack of a solution on stubborn bureaucrats in the Local Agrarian Commission, who consulted and sided with the municipal president rather than dealing solely with the ejidal committee. Miacatlán’s agrarian leader wrote to the CNA:

How many Delegates visit Miacatlán with the object of dealing with the pueblo’s agrarian matters? Yet instead of addressing the ejidal committee, as they should in order to gather information and make reports, they address the Municipal President Francisco Beltrán, who is a landowner and the *cacique* of the place. All agrarian proceedings affect his interests; and he seeks ways to confuse such-and-such Delegate...[meanwhile] our complaints are not even heard or attended to.<sup>211</sup>

Here, it should be noted that the Local Agrarian Commission worked closely with all the state governors of Morelos to execute the land reform. Given its association with unpopular políticos in Cuernavaca, who in turn had links to the unpopular municipal presidents of the mid-1920s, it is therefore not surprising that the state agrarian bureaucracy failed to redress Miacatlán’s grievances at this time. Thus the pueblo’s agrarian leaders bypassed the CLA and pleaded the pueblo’s case to national authorities

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<sup>209</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Miacatlán (Miacatlán), exp. 23/3091, leg. 3, f. 147, Report by Vicente Cervantes, 31 August 1927.

<sup>210</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Miacatlán (Miacatlán), exp. 23/3091, leg. 3, f. 158, Report by Juan Escorza, 18 October 1927.

<sup>211</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Miacatlán (Miacatlán), exp. 23/3091, leg. 3, f. 151, Presidente del Comité Particular Administrativo to CNA, 10 September 1927.

in the CNA, although it is not clear in this case if they received a reply. In any case, by doing so, they demonstrated that village sovereignty concerns were vested in ejidal assemblies.

The travails of the agrarian reform in Miacatlán also involved the politico Alfonso María Figueroa, who originally hailed from the village and briefly governed Morelos in 1927. Figueroa, like Governor Velasco, had served in the CNA before becoming the state executive. While serving in the CNA, the ambitious Figueroa attempted to wrestle control of Miacatlán's agrarian committees, and he allied with the unpopular municipal president, Francisco Beltrán, to oppose the ejidal leaders. His actions provoked the ire of the pueblo's *campesinos*. Villagers accused Figueroa of arriving in the pueblo, spreading false information, and holding secret meetings to advance his political ambitions: "he is an agitator of the Pueblos of first order," they wrote in 1926.<sup>212</sup>

Miacatlán fits the pattern occurring throughout rural Morelos from 1924 to 1927 of ubiquitous power struggles between unelected municipal authorities and the village land committees. These *consejos municipales* imposed by provisional and interim governors could count on little bottom-up support. Most, in fact, were allied with the rural elite. The local ejidal committees, then, empowered villagers who struggled against the unelected town councils of the mid-1920s. Municipal officers no longer wielded authority in agrarian matters and most behaved in ways that offended rural politics. These types of internal struggles over the *ejido*, furthermore, occurred particularly in

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<sup>212</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Miacatlán (Miacatlán), exp. 23/3091, leg. 3, f. 79, Residents of Miacatlán to Secretario de Agricultura y Fomento, 7 June 1926.

large municipal seats such as Cuautla, Miacatlán, Puente de Ixtla, and Tetecala, where civil authorities resided and the inhabitants possessed different economic interests. In Miacatlán, the smallholders were ineligible to apply for an ejidal plot, hence their alliance with the municipal president, who colluded with the private holders to gain grazing pastures at the expense of the *ejidatarios*. Villagers with private commercial interests, in other words, repeatedly sought to undermine and overwhelm the *ejido*.

This was particularly the case in Tetecala, which, as noted in the previous chapter, was the site of a political massacre involving PNA members in 1925. Smallholders and the municipal government remained hostile to the agrarian reform, while the pueblo's landless population petitioned constantly for provisional titles in the early 1920s. The municipal president, Antonio Barrera, was even close friends with the local representative of the *hacendado*, Emmanuel Amor.<sup>213</sup> The landless in Tetecala detailed this scenario to the Local Agrarian Commission and requested help to break the grip the local elite had on the land in Tetecala. Specifically, they wanted provisional land titles in order to secure the community's soils against municipal politicians and smallholders hostile to the *ejido*. Finally, a year later in 1924 the pueblo's requests were answered, and Tetecala received its provisional titles. Although the village's problems were far from over, possession of the provisional titles proved decisive when Calles intervened in

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<sup>213</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tetecala (Tetecala), exp. 23/3092, leg. 2, f. 29, Luis Ochoa to CNA, 5 October 1923.

the local disputes in 1925 by ordering the CNA and the War Department to respect Tetecala's land grant.<sup>214</sup>

Agrarian bureaucrats, as the middle-men between the *ejidos* and the National Agrarian Commission, documented similar patterns of conflicts across Morelos. In Yecapixtla, for example, one report observed that “local politicians frequently get involved in agrarian matters, and for this reason a permanent agitation of passions is maintained.”<sup>215</sup> Municipal interventions in ejidal affairs, in other words, were a common source of the political instability in the mid-1920s. What unfolded on the ground in mid-1920s, then, was a political struggle for the rights to control the pueblos' soils. During this process, villages adapted to the post-revolutionary institutional landscape by using the ejidal assemblies to battle the local elite, which clung to weakened municipal governments. Thus, similar to the way in which the pueblos sought to cast their political fortunes with the victorious sides in presidential politics, local *agraristas* realized that the ejidal committees, not the town councils, were now the vehicles to control surrounding natural resources. More than just control of the land, however, the agrarian assemblies sanctioned by the CNA gave rural communities space to maneuver politically and the ability to weather the stormy waters of agrarian politics in the 1920s.

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<sup>214</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tetecala (Tetecala), exp. 23/3092, leg. 2, f.187, Calles to L. Leon, 23 May 1925; AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 743, leg. 4, David Pastrana Jaimes to Emilio Nava and residents of Tetecala, 20 May 1925.

<sup>215</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Yecapixtla (Yecapixtla), exp. 23/3060, leg. 2, f. 12, Report by unknown author, 23 December 1926.

### ***The Politics of Deforestation***

The same schism between the municipality and the *ejido* could be seen in local struggles to control forest resources, as the woodlands were vital to the economy of many pueblos. Charcoal production, in particular, attracted villagers into the woods because the industry required little start-up capital and just a few tools such as an ax, a shovel, and a machete. *Campesinos* made charcoal kilns in the forest by felling oak trees and chopping the trunks into logs a few feet long, then piling the logs upright and covering the structure with earth. Once the kiln was lit and smoldering, villagers tended the fire for up to forty-eight hours in order to prevent too much air from entering the furnace, which would burn the wood rather than produce charcoal.<sup>216</sup> The forests were of value especially to the highland communities of northern Morelos, where seasonal migration to the warm southern valleys during the sugar harvest had for centuries offered villagers an important way to earn money. In the 1920s, however, with the haciendas lying in ruins, the sale of forest resources facilitated the revival of rural life. “Pedro Martínez” (Lewis’s famously anonymous source) recounted how at the beginning of the 1920s residents of the Tepoztlán turned to making charcoal from the forests simply to earn money to clothe themselves. Tepoztecans sold a sack full of charcoal for twenty-five cents and, free of taxes, prospered quickly: “I felt I was rich,” recalled Martínez after taking up the trade. “The whole village became charcoal burners. We practically cut down the forests at that time...we finally began to eat decently...Now we began to come back to life...The forest

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<sup>216</sup> Lewis, *Live in a Mexican Village*, 163-165.

has brought me my freedom!”<sup>217</sup> Exploitation of the woodlands thus lifted many villagers out of destitute poverty and facilitated reconstruction of the battered pueblos. For this reason, disputes over the woodlands were quite frequent even in lowland pueblos that possessed better quality soils in more abundance than their highland counterparts. Again, these conflicts often pitted local *agraristas* against smallholders and hacienda interests.

Forests could generate as much internal discord as could arable land given that the wooded hillsides, like pastures, were part of the communal patrimony of the *ejido*, which, unlike individual family farms, every member had a right to exploit. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the northern highland pueblos—Huiztilac, Coajomulco, Ocoatepec, Santa María, Tetela, Buenavista, Chamilpa, Ahuatepec, Ajuchitlán, Tepoztlán and Temixco—had managed and conserved abundant forest resources. By the 1900s, however, national and foreign companies such as Hampson and Staple had arrived and began to exploit forest resources without regard to conservation. Villagers protested and even rose up to halt this process during the Porfiriato, but with little success. And while the revolution may have temporarily slowed the cutting of the woods, in 1919, the Constitutionalist army, then occupying Morelos, established a military business with landowners in villages to exploit the old *ejidos*. By the early 1920s, Santa María, as we have seen, controlled part of the northwestern forests and competed with communities in the region for territory. Yet even in the lush valleys of southern Morelos, where rice was king, access to patches of the wooded hillsides provoked quarrels in pueblos,

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<sup>217</sup> “Pedro Martínez” was his alias. Oscar Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, 122.

because the sale of firewood, lumber, and charcoal—the main resources extracted from the forests—provided cash-strapped villagers with another source of income.<sup>218</sup>

In both the lowlands and highlands, the ejidal assemblies clashed with municipal governments for control of the hillsides, as we saw in the cases of Miacatlán and Jumiltepec. In Jojutla too, a burgeoning small town of over 6,000 inhabitants in 1930, the municipal government gave illegal licenses to private individuals that allowed them freely to exploit the forests. The head of Jojutla's administrative committee documented all this illicit activity to the Local Agrarian Commission, demonstrating that Francisco Calderón, a Spaniard, was unduly exploiting the hillsides. The ejidal leader cited CNA circular number fifty-one that prohibited such activity without the authorized permission of the local land committee. He also reminded the Local Agrarian Commission that the said circular prohibited foreigners from cutting the woods. Clearly, even by 1924, local *agraristas* were well-versed in the legal framework of the agrarian reform and knew how to appeal to state and national authorities for help, who backed Jojutla in this conflict.<sup>219</sup>

Up in the northern highlands, where the woods were vast and the pueblos largely in control of their exploitation, the old elite could still threaten a community. Soon after the revolution ended, for example, Huitzilac was confronted by Ángel Entrambasaguas, who had despoiled the pueblo of a piece of *monte* back in 1904. The landowner still

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<sup>218</sup> For historical studies on Mexican forests, see Boyer (ed.), *A Land Between Waters* and Wakild, *Revolutionary Parks* and Mikael Wolfe, "The Sociological Redesignation of Ejido Land Use, 1856-1912," in *Mexico in Transition: New Perspectives on Mexican Agrarian History, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries / México y sus transiciones: Reconsideraciones sobre la historia agraria mexicana, siglos XIX y XX*, eds. Antonio Escobar Ohmstede and Matthew Butler (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013).

<sup>219</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 744, leg. 10, CLA transcription to Gobernador del Estado, 11 September 1924 and Secretario General de Gobierno to CLA, 7 October 1924.

considered the disputed hillside his property and demanded that the pueblo return the lumber they had cut on his former property. He then denounced Huitzilac before government authorities. This alarmed the leaders of Huitzilac, as the community in 1922 had yet to receive a provisional land grant. They urged Governor Parres to restitute their lands, but at the same time not to be burdened by legal distinctions. “If we lack the documents to verify [our previous ownership of] the property,” Huitzilac’s agrarian leader wrote, “do not proceed and be hampered by restitution. We request that you give us *dotación*.”<sup>220</sup> They needed an *ejido*, in any form, to undercut the former landowner’s claims. The government acted in response by delivering a definitive land restitution of 440 hectares in 1929, while also recognizing the pueblo’s communal right to exploit 11,611 hectares of wooded hillsides.<sup>221</sup>

The rush to exploit the hillsides coupled with little government oversight in the 1920s resulted in widespread deforestation with major ecological consequences. Agronomists and rural folks alike commented on the alarming rates of deforestation occurring in the 1920s. Take for instance the agrarian representatives of El Hospital (Cuautla), who wrote to the CNA warning that “in this *Ranchería* the *monte* is rapidly being destroyed, and as there is no one to stop this, it is believed that within a short time not even the residents of this pueblo will have a place to cut wood for our needs.”<sup>222</sup> According to an agrarian regulation of 1922, a pueblo that possessed only a provisional

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<sup>220</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 745, leg. 6, Felipe Hinojosa to Parres, 21 October 1922.

<sup>221</sup> Margarita Estrada Iguíniz, “Cambio social y costumbres laborales: Contradicciones entre uso y protección del bosque en Huitzilac, México,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 18, no. 2 (2002): 331.

<sup>222</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, El Hospital (Cuautla), exp. 23/2968, leg. 2, f. 105, M. Cabañes Flores to CNA, 11 November 1924,



land grant had no right to cut fresh wood from the forests. Villagers could, however, take dead wood for domestic use.<sup>223</sup> But as El Hospital's case illustrates, no authority, at the local or state level, exercised enough power to conserve forest resources and curb the logging in the 1920s. Villagers were practically free to exploit the woods with no oversight. Even travelers passing through Morelos noticed the deforestation occurring in the region. Train passengers bound for Cuernavaca could not ignore the "the large deposits of firewood, railroad ties, and charcoal on both sides of the railway line" when crossing the Ajusco Mountains.<sup>224</sup> As far as the southeastern municipal seat of Puente de Ixtla, an engineer noted that "clear cutting of the forests is being carried out."<sup>225</sup> This process was by no means isolated to Morelos, but the defeat of the landlord class and the decentralized agrarian reform in Zapata's homeland allowed rural inhabitants to exploit the forests at will.

Deforestation, in fact, became not just an environmental concern, but also a political and economic issue. Tepoztlán is notable in this regard and also due to the fact that the pueblo lacked nationally-sanctioned ejidal assemblies in the 1920s because the village, unusually by local standards, did not receive provisional and definitive land restitutions until 1929.<sup>226</sup> The bureaucratic delay was likely the consequence of the

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<sup>223</sup>AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 743, leg. 5, Presidente de la CLA to Secretario General del Gobierno, 1 October 1923.

<sup>224</sup>FAPECFT, Plutarco Elías Calles, exp. 42, inv. 493, leg. 1, f. 75, Report by Felipe Ruíz de Velasco, 5 November 1923.

<sup>225</sup>AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Puente de Ixtla (Puente de Ixtla), exp. 23/2958, leg. 4, f. 5, Report by Angelo Jarrio, 21 October 1925.

<sup>226</sup>AGA, Restitución de Tierras, Tepoztlán (Tepoztlán), exp. 24/3131, leg. 33, ff. 141-147, Provisional Land Restitution, 28 September 1929 and leg. 27, ff. 1-9, Presidential Land Restitution, 14 November 1929.

pueblo's request for restitution. In any case, with no ejidal assemblies, former *zapatistas* and the sons of Porfirian caciques battled for control of the municipal government during the 1920s. When Robert Redfield lived in Tepoztlán in 1926-1927, the town council, like most others at the time, was imposed by Cuernavaca, and the anthropologist described it as doing "little beyond the administration of routine matters" except regulating access to surrounding common lands.<sup>227</sup> Yet sure enough, soon after the *ejido* was established in 1929, Oscar Lewis noted that hostilities broke out between the new agrarian committees and the old *municipio* over the rights to control the communal lands. The battle became so heated that the Agrarian Department threatened to send federal troops to resolve the matter if the municipality did not relinquish its rights to govern surrounding lands. As a result, the *ejidatarios* won control of the pueblo's soils, thereby weakening the town council.<sup>228</sup>

The issue of access to the forests developed into a political identity marker in Tepoztlán. In the 1920s, two political groups—the *bolcheviques* and the *centrales*—arose to battle for command of the village's municipal government. Former *zapatistas* led the *bolcheviques* and controlled the municipal government from 1922 to 1928. Exploitation of the forests was the principal issue dividing these two groups. The *bolcheviques* sought to defend the communal property of the village and limit the cutting of the woodlands, while the *centrales*, led by the sons of Porfirian *caciques* who owned private property in the pueblo, wanted to exploit the highlands on a massive scale.

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<sup>227</sup> Redfield, *Tepoztlan*, 66.

<sup>228</sup> Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, 116.

Initially, the *bolcheviques* received support from the majority of Tepoztecanos, but, over time, their influence decreased precisely because they opposed profiteering from the production of charcoal. In contrast, the *centrales* began to win more sympathizers because of their desire to exploit the forests. In 1928, the *centrales* won control of the municipal government and formed a cooperative to produce charcoal, which included up to 500 members from Tepoztlán and surrounding villages. Members of the cooperative earned between twenty and thirty times as much money producing charcoal as they did working as daily agricultural workers. Juan Hidalgo, leader of the *centrales*, became the most powerful figure in Tepoztlán until men from nearby San Pablo assassinated him in 1935. Shortly afterwards, President Lázaro Cárdenas visited Tepoztlán and declared the surrounding forests as a national park. The production of charcoal decreased dramatically after Cárdenas's intervention.<sup>229</sup>

The forests, therefore, stood at the center of agrarian conflicts for many communities. Yet the dynamics of these conflicts were different from village to village. For Tepoztlán, the woodlands represented a source of internal struggle.<sup>230</sup> For Santa María, on the other hand, control of large swathes of the forests seemed to reinforce the pueblo's internal cohesion and fed the village's ambition to dominate neighboring communities. In all cases, harvesting the riches of the wooded hillsides allowed rural inhabitants to generate internal sources of income. At least in the 1920s, no local, state,

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<sup>229</sup> Lomnitz-Adler, *Evolución*, 157-177. For the creation of the national park, see Wakild, *Revolutionary Parks*.

<sup>230</sup> Competition for the forests also caused a boundary dispute with Milpa Alta, a highland pueblo located in the Federal District. See AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 750, leg. 7.

or national authority possessed the power to prevent villagers from venturing into the woods. The ejidal assemblies held sway.

By 1929, the agrarian reform had radically transformed land tenure in Morelos. Whereas twenty-eight families owned three quarters of state's total surface in 1910, in 1930 over 20,000 families controlled the most productive soils. Some 208,500 hectares of lands were transferred to over 180 pueblos in the 1920s. In just ten years, then, the revolution redistributed close to half of the state's surface and practically all the fields in the richest valleys. These official figures, while not the most precise indicators of who commanded exactly which fields, nonetheless reflect the degree to which property ownership had been altered in rural Morelos. Consequently, the hacienda was dismantled as an important economic unit in the countryside and eclipsed by the *ejido*. Santa Clara hacienda, for example, the fourth largest estate on the eve of the revolution in Morelos, had by 1927 lost seventy-five percent of its total land and ninety-five percent of its irrigable fields.<sup>231</sup> That same year, only four or five haciendas functioned in Morelos. Dozens of others were abandoned and decaying. Considering the government's duty finished, in 1929 President Portes Gil signed a law for Morelos that ended land reform in the state and disbanded the Local Agrarian Commission, at least for the next four years.<sup>232</sup> The *ejido* in Morelos, national elites concluded, had been realized, and it was now time to pave way for a nation of small capitalist farmers. Agrarian reform in Mexico subsequently declined for the remainder of the Maximato. Village petitions for

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<sup>231</sup> González Herrera and Embriz Osorio, "La reforma agraria y la desaparición del latifundio en el estado de Morelos. 1916-1927," in *Morelos: Cinco Siglos*, 291, 295-296.

<sup>232</sup> Eyler N. Simpson, *The Ejido: Mexico's Way Out* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 117, fn. 25.

additional lands, waters, and forests continued apace, however. The pueblos' constant demand for natural resources, in fact, led to a second stage of the agrarian reform under President Lázaro Cárdenas.

### ***The Second Phase of the Agrarian Reform***

Land redistribution in the 1930s Morelos was not as spectacular as the agrarian reform of the 1920s, but the political ramifications of the second phase, which provide a clear example negotiation between rural communities and Mexico City, were just as significant. Cárdenas indeed toured rural Morelos on numerous occasions during his presidency.<sup>233</sup> Between 1934 and 1940, Cárdenas responded to village petitions and doled out a further 70,000 hectares of land to agricultural settlements in Morelos, further cementing *zapatista* support for the federal government. Admittedly, many of the ejidal extensions in the 1930s included only secondary lands such as pastures and rain-fed fields given that the richest soils had been redistributed in the 1920s. In any event, over fifteen new agrarian settlements were established and officially recognized during the second phase of the agrarian reform, alleviating pressures in some overpopulated pueblos.<sup>234</sup> Mexico's agrarian bureaucracy was also reorganized, replacing the local executive and administrative committees with *comisariados* and *consejos de vigilancia ejidales*.<sup>235</sup> Cárdenas then assumed office in December 1934; by this time, growing tensions in the Morelos countryside had led to the outbreak of *El Tallarín's* rebellion.

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<sup>233</sup> Luis González, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1934-1940*, vol. 15: *Los días del Presidente Cárdenas* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1981), 19, 75, 121, 156, 176.

<sup>234</sup> Elizabeth Holt Büttner, "Evolución de las localidades en el estado de Morelos según los censos de población, 1900-1950," *Anuario de Geografía* 2 (1962): 114-116.

<sup>235</sup> Fabila, *Cinco siglos*, 594-596.

Key to understanding those pressures was the growing landless population in the pueblos, many of whom were migrants from Guerrero searching for cultivable fields. From just over 100,000 inhabitants in 1921, the population of Morelos grew to more than 132,000 people by 1930. Ten years later the state counted over 182,000 residents, slightly more than the number of persons living in Morelos in 1910. As a consequence, the landless teemed in pueblos across the state—300 in Yautepec, 150 in Villa de Ayala, 125 in Totolapan, and eighty in Jonacatepec.<sup>236</sup>

As the population increased so did the number of petitions for an ejidal extension (*ampliación de ejidos*). From reading the documents, agrarian bureaucrats could see that more and more villagers were growing dependent on private rental lands for work, which strengthened the hand of local elites. Meanwhile, landowners became increasingly hostile to landless *campesinos* because their petitions threatened to redistribute the last lands owned by the haciendas. In Yautepec, for example, peasants wrote to Cárdenas to denounce the administrator of the Atlihuayan hacienda, who tried to intimidate them into signing an agreement before their land petition could be heard by agrarian authorities.<sup>237</sup> Likewise, more and more *ejidatarios* from Amilcingo (Cuautla) were forced to rent fields from the distant Tenango hacienda because what lands they did possess were insufficient

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<sup>236</sup> AGA, Ampliación de Ejidos, Yautepec (Yautepec), exp. 25/3057, leg. 13, f. 2, Fortino Ayala, 10 March 1936; AGA, Ampliación de Ejidos, Villa de Ayala (Ayala), exp. 25/2960, leg. 4, f. 290, Félix de Jesús to Jefe de Depto. Agrario, 3 August 1935; AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Totolapan (Totolapan), exp. 23/3005, leg. 5, ff. 2-4, Comisariado Ejidal to Refugio Bustamante, 23 May 1935; AGA, Ampliación de Ejidos, Jonacatepec (Jonacatepec), exp. 25/3029, leg. 6, ff. 2-4, Residents of Jonacatepec to Refugio Bustamante, 7 December 1935.

<sup>237</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, exp. 503.11/47, f. 11, Raymundo G. Cárdenas, José H. Salgado, and Francisco Díaz to Cárdenas, February 1935.

to sustain their families. Every year people left the pueblo in search of cultivable soils.<sup>238</sup> Their experiences of dealing with landowners were seldom pleasant. Chiconcuac (Xochitepec), for instance, had constant troubles with the nearby hacienda of the same name. In 1938, while still trying to obtain more land, the leader of the *ejido* summed up the pueblo's relationship with landlords and merchants by stating that because of "the bad deals we have received from past landowners, we sincerely believe that all the rich will betray us."<sup>239</sup> The *ejidatarios* wanted the governor to intervene and expropriate the hacienda's remaining properties, including its buildings and *casco* in order to establish an agricultural school, public offices, and a rice mill. Chiconcuac continued to send annual petitions to Cuernavaca until the early 1940s but they apparently received no response. Truth be told, even though Cárdenas heard Chiconcuac's pleas on an official visit to the pueblo in 1935, there simply was no more surrounding land available to extend the *ejido*.<sup>240</sup>

In other regions of Morelos, however, goods lands were still to be had, especially on the plains around the Tenango hacienda in the southeast, where the García Pimentel family still held abundant fields into the 1930s. Tenango had been the second largest estate in Porfirian Morelos covering nearly 39,000 hectares in 1910 (7.8% of the state's total surface), but by 1927 it had lost over half its lands to eastern pueblos.<sup>241</sup> The Tenango hacienda nonetheless remained extremely large by local standards and its

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<sup>238</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Otilio Montaña (Cuautla), exp. 23/2966, leg. 2, f. 162, 24 December 1934.

<sup>239</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 751, leg. 9, Comisariado Ejidal to Elpidio Perdomo, 12 August 1938.

<sup>240</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Chiconcuac (Xochitepec), exp. 23/2985, leg. 4, f. 15, Emilio Portes Gil transcription to Departamento Agrario, 14 October 1935.

<sup>241</sup> González Herrera and Embriz Osorio, "La reforma agraria y la desaparición del latifundio en el estado de Morelos," in *Morelos: Cinco siglos*, 291, 294.

administrators made agrarian life difficult for southeastern villages by diverting irrigation waters, opposing land petitions and titles in the courts, and even fielding white guards to intimidate *campesinos*. In 1935, a group of *agraristas* from among the three hundred residents and peons of Tenango submitted a land petition to the governor and were threatened for doing so by the hacienda's administrator. The group then petitioned the governor to intervene and mobilized the Morelos Liga, proposing that the community be raised to the status of "congregation" and renamed "Lázaro Cárdenas."<sup>242</sup> Neither of these proposals materialized, but in 1938 Cárdenas intervened and broke up Tenango hacienda's holdings; a year later the pueblo received its definitive land grant of 1,621 hectares, while neighboring pueblos secured extensions of their *ejidos* from the estate's lands.<sup>243</sup> The *cardenistas*, thus, responded to mobilization in eastern Morelos by backing landless villagers in conflicts against one of the last remaining and most prestigious *hacendado* families from the Porfiriato.

Yet it was not just the old elite that threatened to undermine the *ejido* in the 1930s. Politicians in both the state and the national regimes menaced the countryside by attempting to wrestle fields and waters away from communities. This was particularly the case at the end of the Maximato, as Calles's extended stays in Cuernavaca had naturally attracted more national politicians to the region. Even Cárdenas owned a ranch

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<sup>242</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 752, leg. 6, f. 35, Tomás Vergara to Presidente del H. Congreso Campesino Revolucionario, not dated.

<sup>243</sup> Sinécio López Méndez, Laura Helguera Reséndiz, and Ramón Ramírez Melgarejo, *Los campesinos de la tierra de Zapata*, vol. 1: *Adaptación, cambio y rebelión* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1974), 135-136.



outside of Cuernavaca, although no disputes appear to have occurred over the property.<sup>244</sup> Once again, the ejidal committees and their links to the presidency assisted locals in defending village natural resources. Such was the case in Panchimalco (Jojutla), where *ejidatarios* wrote President Rodríguez to denounce state congressman Jesús Gómez for taking irrigation waters from the community and for threatening locals who did not support his political campaigns. Gobernación responded to these complaints by ordering the governor of Morelos to provide security and protection for the *ejidatarios* of Panchimalco.<sup>245</sup> Likewise in Tlalquilténango, the ejidal leader, Rubén Jaramillo, implored Cárdenas to intervene on behalf of the pueblo in order to prevent national Senator Alfonso Sámano and two state politicians from imposing erroneous taxes on local *ejidatarios*.<sup>246</sup> Although the outcome of Tlalquilténango's case remains unclear, Cárdenas later backed Jaramillo and the *campesinos* in the southern hot lands in several disputes with political elites.<sup>247</sup> Another similar case involved Carlos Lavín of Amacuzac, who at the time held a post in the state legislature. The ejidal committees grew tired of honoring a contract with Lavín signed back in 1930, which gave the state congressman control of thirty-five hectares of the *ejido*. Under any circumstances, such a contract violated official regulations governing ejidal lands. After Amacuzac's first protest, Lavín tried to have the agrarian committee leaders removed from their posts, but the Agrarian Department refused Lavín, instead siding with the elected assembly

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<sup>244</sup> González, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana*, vol. 15, 19.

<sup>245</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Abelardo L. Rodríguez, exp. 552.5/549, Juan F. Cabral to Refugio Bustamante, 22 November 1934.

<sup>246</sup> AGA, Ampliación de Ejidos, Tlalquilténango (Tlalquilténango), exp. 25/3078, leg. 11, ff. 81-81, Rubén Jaramillo to Cárdenas, 26 April 1937.

<sup>247</sup> Padilla, *Rural Resistance*.

members.<sup>248</sup> Similarly in eastern Morelos, in 1934 then federal deputy Jesús Gutiérrez forged a deal with the administrator of Tenango hacienda to alter hydraulic works in the region in order to irrigate the hacienda's fields. Soldiers then appeared at the mouth of a canal named "Tequixquiapa" and installed works that deprived the pueblos of Jonacatepec, Huazulco (Zacualpan), and Chalcatzingo (Jantetelco) of their waters. Only after Cárdenas broke up Tenango hacienda in 1938 did such abuses committed by the estate diminish.<sup>249</sup> In another instance, even *ejidatarios* in a nearby community spoke out in defense of embattled neighbors. The agrarian committee in Tetecala raised the alarm before President Rodríguez that a corrupt agronomist had forged documents pertaining to Coatlán del Río's agrarian files in order to favor national Senator Lamberto Hernández in a dispute that also involved the Cocoyotla hacienda.<sup>250</sup> Thus, the experience of the ejidal committees during the 1930s was similar to that of the previous decade in that the nationally-sanctioned institutions offered the pueblos political space to defend natural resources from local elites and to establish direct channels of communication with a receptive presidency.

Agrarian reform in the 1930s, therefore, eased tensions in the countryside and further solidified support for the national regime. The *cardenistas* had responded to the petitions of the growing landless population and sided with the *agraristas* against Morelos's rural elites and members of the national political elite. By allowing the region

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<sup>248</sup> AGA, Ampliación de Ejidos, Amacuzac (Amacuzac), exp. 25/2952, leg. 5, f. 46, Antonio Villarreal to Depto. Agrario, 15 June 1936.

<sup>249</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, f. 113, Lucio Hernández to Director de Geografía, 11 October 1937.

<sup>250</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Abelardo L. Rodríguez, exp. 552.14/1001, Francisco García Zavala to Rodríguez, 19 April 1934.

to carry out the first statewide land reform in post-revolutionary Mexico, national elites earned agrarian credentials they could use to bolster their legitimacy in the face of a mobilized society. Even more importantly, they rallied the *campesinos* of the Cuernavaca and Cuautla Amilpas valleys to defend the federal government during the national crises of 1920, 1923-1924, and 1926-1929, when the Sonoran regime was at its most vulnerable. The pueblo alliance with Mexico City would pave the way for the growth of the PNR in 1930s. Then, in 1938, the post-revolutionary agrarian reform in Morelos was consummated when Cárdenas officially inaugurated the opening of the giant sugar mill at Zacatepec.<sup>251</sup>

For the *zapatistas*, most of whom eventually settled back in their villages to work ejidal plots, the federal government had provided effective leverage via the ejidal assemblies to prevent the old landlord class from making a successful combat in Morelos. One former combatant defiantly told an American visitor, Ernest Gruening, that “we are growing what we want to grow and for our own use.”<sup>252</sup> *Campesinos* were now free to plant as they wished and no longer forced to toil in the cane fields of the great estates. Pedro Martínez remembered of the Porfirian days: “everything went to the rich, the *hacendados*...we were completely enslaved by the *hacendados*. That is what Zapata fought to set right.”<sup>253</sup> But if the planters had now retreated from the scene, the great agricultural enterprises they had built in the decades prior to the revolution had left indelible imprints on the physical geography of Morelos. In particular, the network of

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<sup>251</sup> For later conflicts involving *ejidatarios* and the mill, see Padilla, *Rural Resistance*, 55-84.

<sup>252</sup> Quoted in Gruening, *Mexico*, 162.

<sup>253</sup> Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, 91.

irrigation canals that once watered sugar cane fields was now taken over by the *ejido* to drench rice paddies. Control of the irrigation system proved to be the decisive factor behind the pueblos' green revolution in the 1920s and 1930s and so is the topic of chapter three.

### Chapter III: Irrigation Waters, Rice, and the Pueblos' Green Revolution

Coupled with the rich valley soils, irrigation waters represented the most important natural resources for lowland pueblos in post-revolutionary Morelos. Access to irrigation waters was crucial for the local economy because it provided *ejidatarios* with the opportunity to earn scarce cash in the 1920s by growing commercial crops for sale at a time when the sugar haciendas lay in ruins. In fact, the cultivation of rice in rural Morelos boomed in the early 1920s, as farmers responded to rising market prices (see Appendix B). In 1910, when the grain was second only to sugar in terms of annual production in Morelos, planters harvested 12,000 metric tons of rice.<sup>254</sup> Twenty years later, the region produced 27,000 metric tons of rice, making the state among the top producers of rice in Mexico.<sup>255</sup> Rice was grown on seventy percent of the irrigated lands in Morelos, while every type of rural settlement—pueblos, hamlets, towns, haciendas, ranches, agrarian colonies—planted the grain.<sup>256</sup> In particular, *ejidatarios* cultivated rice for commercial sale. This suggests that *morelenses* did not fight a revolution merely to retreat to their cornfields, as the closed communitarian model of *zapatismo* emphasizes.<sup>257</sup> Instead, they often sought participation in the market economy, which in turn brought agricultural workers into direct contact with the state, because, unlike his

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<sup>254</sup> Candido Ruiz de Velasco, *El cultivo del arroz* (Mexico City: B. Trucco, 1941), 39.

<sup>255</sup> Holt Büttner, "Evolución de las localidades," 68.

<sup>256</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, f. 89, Eliseo Minor to Dir. de Aguas, 11 August 1928.

<sup>257</sup> Closed communitarian portrayals of *zapatismo* have tended to stress the peasantry's reluctance to participate in the commercial market. Womack's classic work, for instance, cites the 1914-1915 land reform in Morelos, when villagers immediately turned to subsistence farming, to suggest that peasants were not interested in commercial agriculture. The main evidence for this interpretation is Zapata's warning to villagers that "if you keep on growing chile peppers, onions, and tomatoes, you'll never get out of the state of poverty you've always lived in. That's why, as I advise you, you have to grow cane." Quoted in Womack, *Zapata*, 240-241. See also Padilla, *Rural Resistance*.

Porfirian and revolutionary predecessors, President Calles attempted to regulate the sale of rice. Access to irrigation waters indeed allowed *ejidatarios* to redefine how the land was cultivated. Thus to a significant extent a pueblo “green revolution” took hold in the countryside, which was marked by increased village control of the hydraulic system and the reorientation of local agriculture to serve both the commercial and subsistence aims of the peasantry. With the assistance of the *callista* state in the form of agricultural credit, irrigation works, and a rice regulatory board, villagers took advantage of the agrarian reform to rebuild and restructure the economy of Morelos. The pueblos’ green revolution, that is to say, was the real agrarian revolution.

Meanwhile, in 1926 the federal government under President Calles established Juntas de Aguas (water juntas) to administer Morelos’s principal rivers, reconstruct the semi-destroyed hydraulic system, and arbitrate disputes between users of the canals. The debut of these federal water councils added a new component to the agrarian struggle, and rural receptions to them varied according to the historic water rights of individual pueblos, their geographical locations along the canal network, the strength of local elites, and the conduct of junta personnel. Overall, however, the evidence reveals that communities that controlled large quantities of waters often ignored decisions made by the federal water juntas in regards to distribution of the liquid. These “strong,” often older villages, such as Anenecuilco, Tezoyuca, and Tlacotepec, were usually among the first users of a shared canal, enabling them to stop the flow of waters to lower elevation pueblos. By contrast, communities that lacked sufficient irrigation waters, such as Chiconcuac and Zacualpan actively sought the intervention of the federal juntas as leverage to gain access to more water. Complicating this situation was the fact that proprietary smallholders and hacienda interests were often hostile to the water juntas,

driving local *ejidatarios* to seek the councils' arbitration in disputes with local elites.<sup>258</sup> The federal juntas, that is to say, were the sites of different kinds of negotiations between local and national actors involving inter-pueblo feuds. In turn, these struggles involving rival villages and the federal water juntas reveal just how important rice cultivation had become for post-revolutionary pueblos, who, by 1940, still maintained de facto control of the region's irrigation waters.

Only with the opening of Mexico's Archivo Histórico del Agua (AHA) in 1994 have thorough histories of water in the Mexican countryside begun to trickle forth. Laura Valladares's study of water in Morelos before and after the *zapatista* revolution, for example, has shown the ubiquity of conflicts between villages for control of the liquid resource and argued that haciendas managed the irrigation system better than did *ejidatarios*.<sup>259</sup> This chapter uses new sources recently cataloged in Mexico's national water archive to corroborate Valladares's findings by demonstrating that the equitable distribution of water stood as the greatest challenge to post-revolutionary governments in rural Morelos. In so doing, it contributes to a small body of literature that focuses on the struggle for water as the main engine of unrest in the countryside.<sup>260</sup> The widespread

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<sup>258</sup> For new works that also find varied responses to the water juntas, including how their arrival provoked disputes between *ejidatarios* and smallholders, see J. Édgar Mendoza García, "El manantial La Taza de San Gabriel (Puebla) y los manantiales de Teotihuacan (Estado de México) ante la federalización: Un análisis comparativo entre 1917 y 1960," in *Mexico in Transition: New Perspectives on Mexican Agrarian History, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries / México y sus transiciones: reconsideraciones sobre la historia agraria mexicana, siglos XIX y XX*, eds. Antonio Escobar Ohmstede and Matthew Butler, 2013 and Jesús Edgar Mendoza García, "Los municipios de San Gabriel Chilac y San Juan Teotihuacan ante la federalización de las aguas, 1888-1960," *Relaciones* 34, no. 136 (2013): 359–397.

<sup>259</sup> Valladares de la Cruz, *Cuando el agua se esfumó*.

<sup>260</sup> Boyer, *A Land Between Waters*; Juan Manuel Durán, Martín Sánchez, and Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, eds., *El Agua en la historia de México: Balance y perspectiva* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2005); Luis Aboites Aguilar, *El agua de la nación: Una historia política de México, (1888-1946)* (México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1998); Luis Aboites Aguilar, *La irrigación revolucionaria: Historia del sistema nacional de riego del Río Conchos, Chihuahua, 1927-1938* (México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1988); Luis Aboites Aguilar and Alba Morales Cosme, "Amecameca, 1922. Ensayo sobre centralización política y Estado nacional en México," *Historia Mexicana* 49, no. 1 (1999): 55–93.

cultivation of rice explains in part why water was so contentious in Morelos. In the forty years before the 1910 revolution, the wealthiest *hacendados* invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to construct new hydraulic works in order to channel waters to formerly rain-fed fields, increasing the amount of irrigated land in Morelos by over 20,000 hectares (a 180 percent increase). This process, according to Horacio Crespo, was directly responsible for the conditions that led to Zapata's rebellion, because it decreased the amount of rain-fed plots available for rent to pueblos, thereby depriving rural communities of the means to sustain a livelihood.<sup>261</sup> Alejandro Tortolero has gone one step further than Crespo and argued that the diminishing access to water, as much as if not more than unequal land tenure, led the *campesinos* of Morelos to take up arms.<sup>262</sup> Recent scholarship has thus placed water at the center of the *zapatista* struggle, yet these works have barely focused on the different rural responses to the centralization of water management in the 1920s and 1930s and its political consequences. This study, then, answers Luis Aboites's call to take into account relationships between the town councils and local elites; municipal seats and subject pueblos; and ejidal assemblies and municipal governments when studying water.<sup>263</sup>

The chapter begins with a discussion of Morelos's damaged hydraulic system circa 1920, arguing that deforestation shrunk the amount of available water at a time of rising commercial demand, intensifying agrarian conflicts. The second section examines the spread of rice cultivation in post-revolutionary Morelos, with a particular focus on

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<sup>261</sup> Horacio Crespo, *Modernización y conflicto social: La hacienda azucarera en el estado de Morelos, 1880-1913* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, 2009), 77.

<sup>262</sup> Tortolero, *Notarios y agricultores*; Alejandro Tortolero Villaseñor, "Water and Revolution in Morelos, 1850-1915," in *A Land Between Waters*.

<sup>263</sup> Luis Aboites Aguilar and Valeria Estrada Tena, "Introduction," in *Del agua municipal al agua nacional. Materiales para una historia de los municipios en México 1901-1945*, eds. Luis Aboites Aguilar and Valeria Estrada Tena (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2004), 12.



*callista* attempts to regulate the sale of the grain and eliminate middlemen and speculators. A third section examines efforts by the federal juntas to administer the region's waters equitably, followed by a section exploring the patterns of village struggles over irrigation waters. The chapter concludes with a section highlighting the power struggles between the federal, state, and local governments for control of the hydraulic system.

### ***The Hydrology of Post-revolutionary Morelos***

Agriculture thrives year-round in Morelos thanks to the various sources of water that bathe the rural landscape. Apart from the annual rainy season running from May to September, water originates from mountain precipitation in the state's northern highlands and flows southward to numerous river basins, while also feeding bountiful springs that arise at the base of the Ajusco Mountains. The hydrology of Morelos is truly favorable to commercial agriculture. On the one hand, the Amacuzac River enters from the west and serves as the riverbed for a network of streams and rivers that traverse the region, and as part of Morelos's southern boundary with Guerrero. In the east, meanwhile, the Amatzinac River originates in the southern foothills of the Popocatepetl Volcano and irrigates the fields of communities bordering Puebla. The Cuautla and Yautepec Rivers slice through the heart of Morelos and provide irrigation waters to the most populous valleys; while the Tembembe and Chalma Rivers flow southward along the western edge of the state. Smaller networks of rivers, streams, brooks, and ravines feed these principal veins.

Before the revolution, these waters were loosely centralized by municipal governments, individual villages, haciendas, private interests, or associations of users. While the question of who exactly commanded which waters in Morelos over the

centuries remains unstudied, it is clear that local actors controlled the liquid. Pueblos possessed the oldest rights to the rivers and springs in the form of colonial titles; with the establishment of municipal governments after Independence in the 1820s, local councils continued to control natural resources, on paper at least.<sup>264</sup> As is well known, however, in Morelos haciendas came to dominate municipal governments and the countryside's riches by the end of the nineteenth century. Henceforth, the right to license local irrigation waters constituted an important source of revenue for municipal treasuries and, as we shall see, opposition to the federal government's attempts to centralize water management often came from village political and economic elites who were also hostile to the *ejidos*.

Yet at the same time, the expansion of commercial agriculture and the establishment of industries such as electricity generation and petroleum production at the national level prompted Mexico City to assert more control over the country's waters. In 1888, the federal government passed the first legislation to regulate the nation's oceans and navigable rivers. Subsequent legislation, including the 1917 Constitution, gave the national government additional powers to oversee and allocate the rights over waterways. On the one hand, continuity in terms of centralization characterized federal laws pertaining to water both before and after the revolution; but on the other hand, the 1917 Constitution broke with the past by emphasizing public over individual ownership of the nation's natural resources (Article 27). The Mexican Revolution, that is to say, centralized water management under a different legal basis than had Porfirio Díaz's government and stressed the social function of water and land.

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<sup>264</sup> Gisela von Wobeser, "El uso del agua en la región de Cuernavaca, Cuautla durante la época colonial," *Historia Mexicana* 32, no. 4 (1983): 467–495.

Presidents Carranza and Obregón, however, barely legislated in water affairs. Instead, mounting conflicts between irrigation users in Morelos in the 1920s prompted President Calles to act further. “The multiple difficulties that constantly arise between water users of the same current...are fundamentally due to the lack of regulation,” opened the government’s 1925 plan for increased involvement in agrarian matters.<sup>265</sup> Shortly afterwards, in January 1926 the Calles regime passed the Irrigation Waters Law: this created the National Irrigation Commission, which operated under the Ministry of Agriculture and gave the Commission the power to regulate and intervene in the administration of Mexico’s irrigation waters. The legislation established who exactly was eligible to receive official water concessions and authorized the federal government to invest in irrigation projects. Villages received water rights in the form of “*dotación*” rather than “*restitución*,” which shows that that a new configuration of water distribution was established in Morelos. Hydrology was central to *callista* agrarian policy because it was assured that irrigation works would modernize the Mexican countryside and the pave the way for the creation of a nation of proprietary smallholders. Later in 1926, the Ministry of Agriculture established juntas in Morelos to oversee the region’s distribution of irrigation waters, resolve conflicts between users, and clean and maintain hydraulic works. Federal investment in irrigation projects also increased from almost five million pesos in 1926, to thirteen million pesos in 1927, and to twenty-one million pesos a year later.<sup>266</sup> These investments were part of a larger national strategy focused largely in the northern states to convert secondary lands into irrigated fields, but in Morelos, where water was relatively abundant, allocation rather than supply presented the main

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<sup>265</sup> Israel Sandre Osorio, ed., *Conflicto y gestión del agua: Documentos para el estudio de las juntas de aguas en el Valle de México, 1920-1950* (México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2008), 63.

<sup>266</sup> Aboites Aguilar, *La irrigación revolucionaria*, 23-34; Aboites Aguilar, *El agua de la nación*, 107-111.

challenge. As one agronomist told the governor in 1931, for six years many engineers from the National Irrigation Commission had been in Morelos studying the water question in order to find new resolutions to old problems.<sup>267</sup> Morelos, therefore, appears to have been one of the few states targeted for hydraulic reform.

Adding to this dilemma was the fact that the fighting of the 1910s left Morelos's hydraulic system badly damaged and in need of expensive investments if the irrigation network were to be reconstructed. *Zapatistas* had targeted and destroyed not only hacienda buildings but also the hydraulic infrastructure that fed waters to cane fields, showing that they considered water distribution as unjust. The *hacendado* Luis García Pimentel, Jr., seeking tax exemptions while he attempted to revamp Tenango hacienda in 1919, wrote to the agrarian authorities to describe the extent of damage suffered by his properties. Between 1912 and 1914, he said militants destroyed sections of a fifty-seven-kilometer canal that carried waters from Agua Hedionda. Insurgents used dynamite to blow up the dam on the Agua Hedionda and what parts of the canal still functioned were clogged with silt, weeds, and trash. Zapata himself had ordered the pueblos to clean the waterways; yet as late as the early 1920s, sections of the canals had become clogged with sediment measuring nearly one meter deep. The land redistribution in the 1920s, meanwhile, forced García Pimentel to postpone plans to reconstruct irrigation works, which still remained damaged at the end of the decade.<sup>268</sup> Across Morelos, the badly damaged irrigation system leaked large quantities of water. The abandoned ditches around the hamlet of El Hospital (Cuautla) caused water to overflow and flood close-by

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<sup>267</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57557, ff. 82-84, José Mares to Vicente Estrada Cajigal, 16 December 1931.

<sup>268</sup> Rocío Castañeda González, Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, and Jorge Antonio Andrade Galindo, eds., *Desastre económico o debilidad federal en los primeros gobiernos posrevolucionarios* (México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2005), 141-148.

irrigable fields, forcing the hamlet to plant crops in neighboring Cuautla's *ejido*.<sup>269</sup> Even as late as 1938, a government engineer noticed that around Jiutepec "the loss of liquid is so evident that even the roads are overrun [with water] and almost impassable."<sup>270</sup>

Damage to Morelos's hydraulic infrastructure, however, only partially explains why water contributed to such upheaval in the countryside. A second factor was that during the provisional agrarian reform of the early 1920s, villagers simultaneously acquired land and water rights through the Local and National Agrarian Commissions. The agrarian reform therefore altered rural property boundaries to the point that they were no longer congruent with how Porfirian haciendas had designed the hydraulic system to allocate water. Consequently, quarrels between communities over water usage arose. As Valladares has convincingly argued, hacienda management of the irrigation network before the revolution produced a more efficient system of water distribution than did the post-revolutionary *ejido*, when command over natural resources resided in the villages. The construction of unauthorized irrigation hydrants along the canals, for example, became a notorious problem for agrarian authorities and a source of tension between villages.<sup>271</sup> Post-revolutionary reconstruction, therefore, involved not only rebuilding Morelos's irrigation network but also putting back together a system of land and water rights that had been consolidated during the Porfiriato and disarticulated during the Mexican Revolution.

A third factor exacerbating water problems was the scale of deforestation occurring on the hillsides, which caused erosion, flooding, and top soils to wash away

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<sup>269</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, El Hospital (Cuautla), exp. 23/2968, leg. 2, ff. 30-33, Report by Marte Gómez, 28 December 1928.

<sup>270</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2347, exp. 33900, ff. 67-68, Felipe N. de Parres to Agustín Pascal, 6 January 1938.

<sup>271</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2347, exp. 33900, ff. 67-68, Felipe N. de Parres to Agustín Pascal, 6 January 1938.

while also decreasing the amounts of water available for irrigation. In 1923, engineer Felipe Ruiz de Velasco lamented this ecological disaster in a twenty-five page pamphlet entitled *Bosques y manantiales del estado de Morelos*. He argued that the richness of the state was not due to its lands, but rather to the numerous sources of streams, springs, and rivers that bathed the valleys. Without them, Ruiz de Velasco asserted, the sugar industry would not have thrived as it did during the Porfiriato. As we have seen, however, during this time individuals in the pueblos made good money exploiting and selling forest resources, and therefore the rapid rate of deforestation continued with no oversight. The solution, Ruiz de Velasco concluded, was to stop cutting down live trees, allow the barren hillsides to recover their vegetation, and conserve forests resources.<sup>272</sup>

Ruiz de Velasco analyzed the decreasing amounts of water available for irrigation during the 1920s; but he did not blame the depletion of the liquid on the semi-destroyed irrigation system or bad management by *ejidatarios*. Instead, Ruiz linked the lack of irrigation water to the destruction of forests:

The cry of alarm must be given: water is disappearing because the forests continue being destroyed! Water is everything and *no one* worries about it, because no one worries about the forests...they [the forests] are the great condensers of the water vapors that float high in the atmosphere, and the bearers of the springs, streams and rivers that give life and joy to the cane fields and rice

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<sup>272</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 42, inv. 493, leg. 1, f. 60-86, *Bosques y manantiales del estado de Morelos*, 5 November 1923. At the time, nearly all villagers and agronomists recognized that the cutting of wooded areas was cause for concern, but few explicitly made the connection between deforestation and the decreasing amounts of water available for irrigation. Felipe Ruiz de Velasco, however, was an exception to this observation, and he became the loudest voice in the agrarian bureaucracy to link the interdependence between forests and water resources. Ruiz de Velasco, an engineer employed by the federal government, grew up in Morelos during the Porfiriato on hacienda Zacatepec. He studied engineering in Europe and returned to Morelos before the revolution to assist in the modernization of the sugar haciendas. Perhaps no one knew agriculture in the state like Ruiz de Velasco. After the destruction of the haciendas during the revolution, Ruiz de Velasco, continued to provide his expertise on agriculture in Morelos, now in service of the agrarian reform. For his study on the Porfirian sugar economy, see Felipe Ruiz de Velasco, *Historia y evoluciones del cultivo de la caña y de la industria azucarera en México hasta el año de 1910*, Edición facsimilar (Cuernavaca: Gobierno del Estado de Morelos, 2010).

paddies. Without the forests there are no waters and without these irrigation is not possible.<sup>273</sup>

According to Ruiz de Velasco, mountain precipitation was the principal source of the region's waters. Bald slopes, moreover, encouraged erosion and run-off onto cultivable fields. Ruiz de Velasco was thus able to see the larger ecological picture and the interdependence of the region's natural resources. Yet the engineer was not the only figure to raise a red flag regarding the state of the woodlands. Luis García Pimentel Jr., who was also familiar with the regional climate, himself warned that giving the villages control of the countryside would allow rural communities to clear cut the forests and plant crops on lands unsuitable for agriculture. The scion of Porfirian Morelos argued that the hacienda system was less destructive of the environment than the *ejido*: "it is the FORESTS that the Hacienda has always undertaken to conserve in order to protect the climatic conditions of the region."<sup>274</sup> Put another way, decentralized management of the region's natural resources led to increased exploitation of the lands, waters, and forests; hence, the recovery of natural resources by the pueblos threatened an ecological catastrophe. The *hacendado* indeed had a point. As Valladares has recently shown, the hacienda system annually rotated the planting of fields and only grew crops on a third of the available lands, allowing the remaining two-thirds of the plots to lay fallow for a period in order to replenish the soil's nutrients and conserve water.<sup>275</sup> *Ejidatarios*, by contrast, simultaneously sowed and irrigated the plots they controlled, disregarding any system of rotation. The pueblos, that is to say, tried to commercialize all their available resources at once without necessarily seeing the need to balance exploitation and conservation. To be sure, it was not that rural inhabitants lacked the knowledge to live in

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<sup>273</sup> FAPECFT, Plutarco Elías Calles, exp. 42, inv. 493, leg. 1, f. 67, *Bosques y manantiales del estado de Morelos*, 5 November 1923.

<sup>274</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 745, leg. 7, CLA to José Parres, 19 July 1923.

<sup>275</sup> Valladares, *Cuando el agua se esfumó*, x.

harmony with their surrounding environment, but rather that the exigencies of their poverty and the need to earn quick money and produce food overrode any long term vision of conservation.<sup>276</sup>

### ***The Rice Boom***

The main reason why water became a source conflict between pueblos was due to the fact that the expansion of rice cultivation on ejidal lands increased the demand for irrigation waters.<sup>277</sup> By 1928, the grain accounted for nearly twenty percent of the land cultivated in the state and over forty percent of the total value of its harvest that year.<sup>278</sup> Like growing sugar cane, rice cultivation also requires significant agricultural expertise on the part of the farmer but has clear advantages as a crop. Unlike sugar cane, which must be irrigated for twelve months out of the year, rice paddies only need four months of steady water supply. The plant matures in five to six months, which means there can be two annual seasons; one beginning in March and April and another in June and July. After the clearing and sowing of the fields and the cleaning of the canals, the maintenance of rice paddies involves close attention by the agriculturalists and a delicate flooding technique that must spread and drain irrigation waters evenly across the land. A watchful eye must always be kept for the growth of fungi on the sprouting grains, while plagues and hail can quickly destroy an entire crop. The planting and harvest seasons are the busiest of the year, when the farmer is bent over with hands and feet immersed in the

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<sup>276</sup> The *ejido*, new scholarship suggests, was anything but a friend to the environment. See Mikael Wolfe, "The Historical Dynamics of Mexico's Groundwater Crisis in La Laguna: Knowledge, Resources, and Profit, 1930s–1960s," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 29, no. 1 (2013): 3–35.

<sup>277</sup> For a description of the technical aspects of rice production in Michoacán, see Alfredo Pureco Ornelas, *Empresarios Lombardos en Michoacán: La familia Cusi entre el porfiriato y la posrevolucion (1884-1938)* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2010), chapter five.

<sup>278</sup> AHIEDM, Agricultura, caja 1, leg. 7, "Estudio Agrologico del Estado de Morelos," 1929.



mud all day.<sup>279</sup> During these months, especially in the 1920s, families with children often required young ones to lend a hand in the fields, keeping them out of school.

The demand for water was particularly high in post-revolutionary Morelos because so much of the liquid used to soak rice paddies leaked out of the canals before it arrived in the fields. Shortly before the arrival of the federal water juntas in 1926, a government bureaucrat estimated that rice farmers used four times the amount of water needed to cultivate the grain given that so much of it was wasted, “for which reason everyone complains about the lack of water.”<sup>280</sup> Countless quarrels arose between neighboring communities due to this situation. In 1922, the small congregation of El Higuerón, for instance, sought temporarily to halt the flow of water into a canal in order to clean and reconstruct irrigation works for their fields. Jojutla, the neighboring town of 3,000 people, refused to allow El Higuerón to interrupt the water flow on the grounds that fifteen days without the fluid would cause their rice paddies to dry up and mean that their crop would be lost. The conflict pitted a large municipal seat against a smaller neighbor and both communities lobbied Governor Parres to intervene.<sup>281</sup>

In geographical terms, rice grew best in the soils around Jojutla, Cuautla, Cuernavaca, and Tetecala, but pueblos in Yautepec and Jonacatepec also reaped good harvests. The evidence suggests that different groups in every type of rural community cultivated rice in these populous regions, but especially the *ejidatarios*, who planted as much of the grain as possible. Pueblos were raising so much rice in the mid-1920s that it prompted agrarian officials to issue a state-wide circular that reminded villagers to not

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<sup>279</sup> For more on the techniques used in cultivating rice, see Stefan Krotz Heberle, “Cooperar y compartir: Antropología política de una asociación de arroceros en Morelos” (Master’s thesis, Universidad Iberoamericana, 1976).

<sup>280</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 583, exp. 8470, f. 5, Juan Ballesteros to Director. de Aguas, 23 June 1925.

<sup>281</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 741, leg. 4, Residents of El Higuerón to Parres, 25 January 1922.

use more water than they were allocated. *Campesinos* in Xoxocotla (Puente de Ixtla), for instance, were growing ninety hectares of rice in the middle of 1927 in an *ejido* that was granted only thirty-six hectares of irrigated lands.<sup>282</sup> It is worth stressing that elite coercion or an official federal plan to promote rice cultivation does not appear to have been a factor in rural inhabitants' decision to plant the grain. Rather, high market prices for rice, which peaked in the mid-1920s, drove the rise in production. Demand for rice was high in the 1920s given that the country suffered from low agricultural output as a consequence of the revolutionary war. Perhaps also explaining the increasing prices paid for rice was the fact that a shortage of malts forced the brewing industry to use the grain as a primary material for beer production.<sup>283</sup> In any event, where rice could be sown, the *ejido* became an economic asset for rural folks, and villagers sought high profits from their harvests. Between 1921 and 1923, before the state began purchasing the harvest, the annual production of rice almost tripled to nearly 3,000 metric tons: "data that completely refutes the endless assertions in regards to the failure of *agrarismo* in Morelos," noted a federal inquiry.<sup>284</sup> The national regime, in other words, applauded the spread of rice cultivation in Morelos *ejidos*. Meanwhile, the state served as the principal supplier of rice to Mexico City and helped the country to become a net exporter of the grain in the 1920s, sending its products to Cuba, the United States, and Europe.<sup>285</sup> *Campesinos'* decision to grow rice, therefore, was fundamentally an economic decision.

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<sup>282</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja. 4330, exp. 57559, f. 36, "Acta de Sesión," 22 June 1927.

<sup>283</sup> Héctor Ávila Sánchez, *Aspectos históricos de la formación de regiones en el estado de Morelos: Desde sus orígenes hasta 1930* (Cuernavaca: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002). 104.

<sup>284</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 10, inv. 5702, leg. 1, f. 7, "Estudio sobre el memorándum presentado por los C.C. Representantes de los hacendados de Morelos," 1924.

<sup>285</sup> Most of the exported rice, however, originated in Sonora, which by 1930 had overtaken Morelos as the leading rice growing state. Stephen H. Haber, Noel Maurer, and Armando Razo, *The Politics of Property Rights: Political Instability, Credible Commitments, and Economic Growth in Mexico, 1876-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 322.

The rice boom, however, faced old problems, as local speculators, who provided growers with credit, purchased the harvests at low prices. Since the first rice harvest of 1921, a federal study noted that the most difficult challenge “that had to be immediately overcome...was the unaffordable price that speculators paid to small producers...[as] the state government lacked resources to confront the situation.”<sup>286</sup> Spanish merchants based in Mexico City continued to capture the Morelos rice market and pay half the market value of the crop. Governor Ambrosio Puente explained the situation to Calles in 1927: “Speculators purchase the rice harvest at laughable prices, as some deals are made as soon as the fields are plowed or others when the ear begins to sprout. In both cases, the producer commits the majority of his harvest.”<sup>287</sup> The “foreign speculators,” the governor proposed, could be cut out of the distribution process by the creation of a state-sponsored Regulatory Board that would organize all the rice farmers into cooperatives, provide credit to *ejidatarios*, and offer the growers double what the speculators paid. In sum, the state government would become the middleman of ejidal rice production.

Calles appears to have approved the plan since it epitomized *callismo* in Morelos by using the power of the state to cut out middlemen. In August 1927, shortly before the harvest season, the state government established the Rice Regulatory Commission by decree.<sup>288</sup> A month later Governor Puente pronounced in the national Senate that farmers would receive fifteen pesos per *carga* of 138 kilograms.<sup>289</sup> In the beginning, however, the project was controversial, because the government could not pay the high prices for rice it promised to farmers, and the plan threatened to further undermine the economic

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<sup>286</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 10, inv. 5702, leg. 1, f. 50, “Estudio sobre el memorándum presentado por los C.C. Representantes de los hacendados de Morelos,” 1924.

<sup>287</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 103, inv. 4628, leg. 1, f. 16, Puente to Calles, 16 June 1927.

<sup>288</sup> *Periódico Oficial del Estado de Morelos*, 31 August 1927.

<sup>289</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 103, inv. 4628, leg. 1, f. 54-56, Puente speech to the Senate, 28 September 1927.

power of local elites. Moreover, Puente circulated orders to police and municipal authorities not to allow any trains at the stations with carloads of rice to leave for the refining mills in Mexico City without registering with the government and providing proprietary evidence of the harvest.<sup>290</sup> This angered the residents of Tenextepango, who wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture to declare that they had no need for a cooperative at the moment, but rather in February during the preparations for the planting season. They remained wary of the governor's guarantees to pay them thousands of pesos for their rice.<sup>291</sup> Puente's political enemies cited multiple cases whereby he imposed the regulatory board by force, threatening some resistant farmers with jail, fines, and land dispossessions. Numerous cases centered on the state government taking over warehouses at haciendas by force, violating lease contracts. The main victims of this repression were local elites linked to Spanish merchants, who stood to lose the most from the new system.<sup>292</sup> *Campesino* rice growers, in other words, found themselves caught between the state government, which they feared would never pay fair prices for their crop, and the old speculators, who remained hostile to any institution favorable to the *ejido*.

Puente in fact admitted to being only able to pay ten pesos per *carga* and blamed part of the problem on the inability of *campesinos* to adapt quickly to the new system. He also cited delays in providing credit and hard cash to agricultural workers before and after the harvest.<sup>293</sup> A year later, in 1928, the bank paid rice growers just twelve pesos per *carga* of 150 kilograms, and portions of this were discounted for insurance, loan

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<sup>290</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 286, exp. 5, Aurelio Gutiérrez to Police Inspector, 19 September 1927.

<sup>291</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 103, inv. 4628, leg. 1, ff. 50-53, Residents of Tenextepango to Secretario de Agricultura y Fomento, September 1927.

<sup>292</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 286, exp. 5, Document by Manuel L. Acosta & Julio Santos Coy, 26 September 1927.

<sup>293</sup> FAPECFT, PEC, exp. 103, inv. 4628, leg. 1, f. 58, Puente to Calles, 27 December 1927.

interests, and taxes.<sup>294</sup> Regulations even prohibited growers from selling rice to private individuals. The traditional creditors, such as Spaniards Manuel Alverdi and José Cuetara, now fought the state monopoly by offering higher prices than the government at thirteen pesos for each *carga* of rice. In any event, the Regulatory Commission did undermine the influence of the old speculators even if it did not eliminate them altogether, as local complaints of abuses committed by these individuals decreased during into the early 1930s.<sup>295</sup> A federal official noted in 1933 that in Morelos “favorable and unfavorable opinions can be heard” regarding the agrarian credit bank: “The eternal exploiters of the *campesino*—the speculator, the *comprador al tiempo*, and the established merchant—are the ones that frequently speak badly of the Bank and its operations.”<sup>296</sup> Now growers centered their complaints on the government and corrupt individuals employed by the state bank that purchased the rice harvests. This was only made worse when market prices for rice started to fall in 1927, then plunged in 1930, and finally bottomed out in 1933, losing more than two-thirds of their peak values in the mid-1920s (see Appendix B). As a result, serious tensions arose between farmers and the state monopoly. In August 1935, representatives from sixty-eight local credit societies met in Jiutepec to rally against the state monopoly. The assembly sought direct control over the production and distribution of rice and proposed to break away from the government-sponsored rice growers’ union.<sup>297</sup> Only when market prices for rice began to climb in the late-1930s did officials describe villagers as content with the cash received

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<sup>294</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 271, exp. 3, Report by Agente #1, 25 October 1929.

<sup>295</sup> A government report also noted that the state monopoly weakened the old speculators. AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 545.3/268, “Estudio sobre la producción de arroz y proyecto de de cooperativa para un red de molinos,” 22 June 1935.

<sup>296</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 1, f. 13, Report by L. Carranco Cardoso, 2 August 1933.

<sup>297</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, exp. 23/2971, leg. 2, f. 439, Report by Nabor Ojeda, 30 August 1935

for their harvests.<sup>298</sup> Given that the struggle over prices occurred at the height of the Great Depression, it is therefore not surprising that the state agricultural bank could never offer satisfactory compensation for the growers' harvests. In the end, however, the state monopoly was a better shock absorber for the fall in rice prices than the old speculators, who remained unwilling to negotiate with *ejidatarios* to the degree that the state did in the post-revolutionary period. Indeed, official regulation of the rice market represented only one way in which the *callista* state sought to win support in the countryside, as it also established new institutions in Morelos charged with resolving village conflicts over water distribution.

### ***Federal Water Juntas***

The political chaos of Morelos's gubernatorial politics in the mid-1920s opened the door for the arrival of national institutions in rural areas; 1926 witnessed the establishment of federal water juntas and federal primary schools in the countryside. By the early 1930s, up to eleven federal water juntas functioned in Morelos, while fifteen similar councils operated in neighboring Estado de México.<sup>299</sup> Some half dozen of these institutions in Morelos were established in 1926 and operated under the Ministry of Agriculture; they were thus key institutions of *callista* centralization. The two most important juntas would attempt to govern the Cuautla and Yautepec Rivers, close to where a majority of the state population resided. All the juntas were founded according to a set of federal regulations known as the *reglamento*, or ordinance, which every user of a given source of water was required to obey. The ordinance that in 1926 established the Cuautla River water junta, for example, listed every spring, ravine, and river that fed the historic waterway. It

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<sup>298</sup> AHIEDM, Tierras, caja 744, leg. 9, "Circular #95 a los Presidentes de los Comisariados Ejidales," 24 November 1938.

<sup>299</sup> Israel Sandré Osorio, "Estudio introductorio," in *Conflicto y gestión del agua*, 19.

registered the volume of water granted to each *ejido*, municipality, military colony, hacienda, and group of smallholders and stated exactly from which source or canal the liquid came. Each group of Cuautla River water users (there were some seventy-five in total) would send a delegate to represent their interests before the junta and annually elect the president of the organization. The council was based in Cuautla and charged with resolving conflicts over water usage, maintaining and repairing hydraulic works, and assigning and authorizing delegates to open and close the water valves and hydrants. The junta would also collect taxes, or *cuotas*, from each group of users to pay the salaries of the institution's president, his secretary, and treasurer, and to purchase construction materials for irrigation works. Water users themselves would perform the arduous labor of cleaning the canals and reconstructing the irrigation system.<sup>300</sup>

Yet simply establishing the juntas as the legitimate institutions to administer Morelos's waters was a challenge. It could take repeated efforts by bureaucrats to persuade villagers to recognize the authority of the water councils. In 1928, for instance, an inspector from Mexico City went to Cuernavaca to report on the Apatlaco River junta and found it practically nonexistent because none of the users would send delegates to represent their interests before the council. The institution had no secretary or treasury and could not appoint personnel to these posts for lack of funds.<sup>301</sup> Some pueblos would not even respond to the junta's inquiries, circulars, or debt notices.<sup>302</sup> Five years later in 1933, an inspector returned to Cuernavaca and found the Apatlaco River junta still

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<sup>300</sup> For transcriptions of the *reglamentos* pertaining to the Cuautla River, Amatzinac Ravine, and the Agua Dulce Ravine, see AHA, Israel Sandré Osorio, *Reglamentos de agua en México siglo XX*, CD-ROM. For the *reglamento* of the Duraznotla Ravine, see AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2367, exp. 33982, ff. 5-10. For the provisional *reglamento* of the Yautepec River, see AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2359, exp. 33944, ff. 2-20.

<sup>301</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, ff. 128-133, Eliseo Minor to Dir. de Aguas, 13 September 1928.

<sup>302</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, f. 92, Eliseo Minor to Dir. de Aguas, 28 August 1928.

disorganized and without sufficient office space. He learned that the council had not operated for the past three years. The federal bureaucrat was finally able to gather representatives of the water users to reorganize the junta, but only after he promised to lower the debts owed by the groups of farmers.<sup>303</sup> Further investigations into the status of the juntas revealed that the national institutions charged with governing the waters of the Xochicupan, Hedionda, and Duraznotla Ravines had never been organized at all.<sup>304</sup> Where the federal government did channel its resources and establish viable juntas was along the principle waterways in Morelos—the Cuautla and Yautepec Rivers and the Amatzinac Ravine.

*Ejidatarios* responded in different ways to the arrival of the federal water juntas. On the one hand, pueblos that controlled sufficient irrigation waters, such as Anenecuilco and Villa de Ayala, saw little need for more bureaucracy and taxes. Francisco Franco, Anenecuilco's agrarian leader, grumbled about the incompetence of agronomists, alleging that the water council imposed high taxes on the pueblos without regards to what types of fields received irrigation waters. Franco wrote to the president of the Cuautla River junta declaring that the humble inhabitants of Anenecuilco "found the water tax strange," and that they refused to pay any debts on the grounds that the "waters belong to the nation."<sup>305</sup> Here, the pueblo interpretation of "national waters" stood in stark contrast to elite conceptions of public property. Villagers considered Mexico's natural resources

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<sup>303</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2347, exp. 33899, ff. 34-35, Francisco S. Souza to Dir. de Aguas, 19 October 1933.

<sup>304</sup> Apparently, their lack of organization was due to the fact that Mexico City had devoted few resources to ensuring the success of the councils. For the Duraznotla Ravine junta to even begin functioning, a bureaucrat estimated that it would require a 40,000 peso investment by the federal government to repair and clean the irrigation works. By 1934, of the dozen or so water juntas Mexico City established after 1925 to administer Morelos's irrigation system, only three had functioned consistently throughout the period. AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2367, exp. 33981, ff. 58-64, Francisco Souza to Dir. de Aguas, 21 October 1933.

<sup>305</sup> AHA, Aguas Nacionales, caja 697, exp. 8072, Agustín Aguilar to Director de Aguas, 11 January 1934.



as first and foremost a source of wealth to serve the inhabitants of the nation—a pueblo-centric view of public property. Likewise, Anenecuilco justified their opposition to taxes “because they say the waters and lands were given to them by the Revolution.”<sup>306</sup> Put differently, shared sovereignty over the Cuautla River did not include federal water taxes. In contrast, elites in Mexico City, who wrote the 1917 Constitution and subsequent agrarian legislation, possessed a state-centered conception of the Mexican Revolution and public property, which placed the federal government as the ultimate proprietor and arbitrator of natural resources. Disagreements over water taxes boiled down to these conflicting interpretations of “public property.”

On the other hand, many newer villages and hamlets that lacked ancient rights and sufficient irrigation waters lobbied the federal juntas to intervene on their behalf against larger communities such as Anenecuilco and Villa de Ayala, both of which were accused of taking neighboring pueblos’ waters.<sup>307</sup> These smaller pueblos, such as Chinameca and Moyotepec (Ayala), were often located at lower elevations along the canals and vulnerable to head towns situated closer to the mouths of the irrigation system. Thus shortly after the Cuautla River junta was established in 1926, the rice-growing villages of Ticumán (Tlaltizapán) and Moyotepec lobbied the Cuautla River junta to intercede on their behalf. Authorities wrote of the need to “force those in Villa de Ayala to free the passage of the waters that the *ejidatarios* of Ticumán need. They [Villa de Ayala] as well as Anenecuilco have obstinately refused to allow the water to pass to Ticumán.”<sup>308</sup> Similarly, in Tecajec (Yecapixtla), residents protested that people in Ocuituco, with a

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<sup>306</sup> AHA, Aguas Nacionales, caja 697, exp. 8072, Agustín Aguilar to Depto. de Aguas, 26 February 1934.

<sup>307</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, ff. 71-75, Junta Act signed by Francisco del Valle, 21 December 1926.

<sup>308</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, f. 208, Israel Gutiérrez to Gumaro García de la Cadena, 26 May 1927.

population of over 1,000, prevented water from passing to the tiny pueblo of some 200 inhabitants.<sup>309</sup> For these newer and smaller pueblos, then, the federal juntas served as a potential counterweight to larger and more powerful neighbors. Yet in all of these cases, although their circumstance and strategies differed, both older and newer pueblos were haggling over the extent of federal oversight; some needed very direct federal support if there was to be a green revolution, while others simply wanted the juntas to maintain the status quo.

In other cases, *ejidatarios* lobbied the federal juntas to intervene in disputes with local elites. The hamlet of Caracol (Yautepec), for example, counted on the Yautepec River junta to force the tenant of the Atlihuayan hacienda, Adolfo Aguirre, to allow waters to pass to the tiny community of fewer than 100 inhabitants. The junta responded by ordering the construction of irrigation works that would distribute the liquid evenly.<sup>310</sup> Likewise, in eastern Morelos, where Luis García Pimentel Jr. clung to the last land holdings of Tenango hacienda, *ejidatarios* in Huazulco, Chalcatzingo, and Jonacatepec requested that Mexico City intervene to stop the tenant of Tenango hacienda from altering irrigation works in favor of the estate. Residents in Huazulco wrote, “The man who is in charge of administering the land of the Tenango hacienda, who has always been an enemy of the revolution, frequently cuts off our water [supply], which causes us serious harm.”<sup>311</sup> The state and national governments answered these petitions by further redistributing Tenango hacienda’s lands in 1938, although the shortage of irrigation waters in eastern Morelos remained a perennial problem.

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<sup>309</sup> Aboites Aguilar and Estrada Tena, *Del municipio*, 206-208.

<sup>310</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4388, exp. 58026, f. 210, illegible to Sec. Arg. Y Fomento, 6 July 1935.

<sup>311</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, f. 93, Clicerio Villafuerte transcription to Secretario de Agricultura y Fomento, 10 September 1937.

In general, however, it was municipal governments, most of which were run by local elites during this time, who most opposed the centralization of water administration, and they did so primarily in the form of non-cooperation with the juntas. Taxes on water usage, we may recall, had served as an important source of revenue for municipal treasuries before the Mexican Revolution, but the federal water juntas deprived the town councils of this possible income. One case of opposition involved municipal authorities sabotaging irrigation works. The inhabitants of Huejotengo wrote that the civil authorities of Ocuituco “had defied the provisions dictated by the Engineer who came from the Ministry of Agriculture” by destroying and constructing irrigation channels that diverted waters from the hamlet.<sup>312</sup> In Cuautla also, the municipal government appropriated water for public and domestic use without the authorization of the federal junta, which deprived nearby *ejidos* of the liquid.<sup>313</sup> *Ejidatarios* from Cuautlixco wrote to the junta president, who relayed the message to Mexico City and requested help to force the municipal authorities to comply with junta regulations.<sup>314</sup> There is indeed little evidence to demonstrate cooperation between the federal juntas and town councils. Rather, municipal governments ignored the federal juntas’ dominion and attempted to retain local control of the irrigation system. Such was the case of Jonacatepec’s municipal president, who sought to establish the Amatzinac Ravine junta headquarters in his own office, which in turn would give him leverage to intervene in the affairs of the water council.<sup>315</sup> The president of the Cuautla River junta lamented “that without the

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<sup>312</sup> AHA, Aguas Nacionales, caja 697, exp. 8072, leg. 1, Residents of Huejotengo to Pres. de la Junta de Aguas del Rio Cuautla, 14 December 1933.

<sup>313</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2367, exp. 33981, ff. 58-64, Francisco Souza to Dir. de Aguas, 21 October 1933.

<sup>314</sup> Aboites Aguilar and Estrada Tena, *Del municipio*, 223-226.

<sup>315</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 18, Pable Ferrat to Febronio Salazar, 25 April 1933.

help of the Civil Force to subdue disobedient pueblos, nothing will ever be able to get done.”<sup>316</sup> Non-compliant town councils controlled by local elites, therefore, posed an obstacle to federal authority, an equitable distribution of water, and ejidal rice farming.

Who exactly were the junta presidents? In theory, waters users would annually elect an executive to preside over the council. Yet if the users failed to hold an election, agrarian authorities in Mexico City could appoint the council’s president, secretary, treasurer, and distributor delegates. In Morelos, it appears that the first council leaders were elected not by the water users but rather appointed by officials in the Ministry of Agriculture. Some junta presidents in fact were frankly unwilling to back *ejidatarios* in conflicts with local elites. For example, the small hamlet of San Antón (Cuernavaca) accused the Rio Apatlaco junta president, Ignacio Loza, of favoring hacienda interests above those of the pueblos. Loza would not give San Antón permission to shut off the water flow in order to clean its canal.<sup>317</sup> Even when water users did elect a junta president, that person was likely not an *ejidatario*. Such was the case of Refugio Bustamante, who was elected as the Cuautla River junta executive in 1931 and later won the governorship in 1934.<sup>318</sup> Operating the federal water councils, therefore, were individuals with no ejidal membership, which subjected the juntas to less village control.

Some junta authorities were downright hostile to *campesinos*. Nicolas Oropeza, president of Amatzinac Ravine junta, served as the executive for five years. Villagers declared that Oropeza and his secretary “have extorted us, charging us completely

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<sup>316</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja, 4325, exp. 57531, leg. 1, f. 206, Francisco del Valle to CNA, 23 May 1927.

<sup>317</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, ff.158-159, Gumaro García de la Cadena to Pres. de de la Junta Rio Apatlaco, 27 November 1928.

<sup>318</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1892, exp. 28492, f. 12, Salvador Melo to Jefe de la Sección de Inspecciones y Junta de Aguas, 11 August 1931.

onerous fines, taking away our right to the waters.”<sup>319</sup> Officials in Mexico City had already once warned Oropeza of imposing erroneous fines on villages.<sup>320</sup> This time the villagers’ lobbying efforts paid off. Weeks later a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture arrived to depose Oropeza and hold a vote to elect a new junta president.<sup>321</sup> In other cases, the junta presidents often referred to the need to use “a strong hand” to force villagers to submit to the junta’s authority.<sup>322</sup> In 1932, the secretary of the Amatzinac Ravine junta simply gave up and resigned his position because he had not been paid a single peso in nearly five months. “I see apathy or defiance to a large extent among pueblo users to pay this [water usage] tax.”<sup>323</sup> The disparaging behavior of the junta presidents was, therefore, a cause of tension between rural communities and the water councils, because junta leaders served their own financial interests above the pressing needs of agricultural communities. The fact that the councils’ committee members earned their income from water usage fees rather than directly from the federal government reinforced this behavior.

Given this scenario, coupled with constant village complaints of insufficient water, it is thus not surprising that dozens of communities openly refused to pay junta taxes, especially as these cut into rice profits. Meanwhile, the federal juntas devoted an enormous amount of effort and documentation to their accounting books, as they were keen to keep detailed records of pueblo water debts. By 1929, for example, Yautepec’s

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<sup>319</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 175, Representatives of Zacualpan, Amilcingo, Tlacotepec and Popotlán to CNA, 1 February 1931.

<sup>320</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 52, Jesús Oropeza to the Pres. de la Junta, 28 January 1932.

<sup>321</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 104, Rafael Rivera to Secro. de Agricultura, 24 February 1931.

<sup>322</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, f. 208, Israel Gutiérrez to Gumaro García de la Cadena, 26 May 1927.

<sup>323</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 45, Juan Pliego to Pres. de la Junta, 7 March 1932.

*ejido*—the largest in Morelos—owed the Yautepec River junta 877 pesos. Smallholders in the same municipality owed the council an additional 210 pesos. Even nearby haciendas had not paid their dues. The Yautepec River junta then sent letters to each of the users, giving each debtor fifteen days to pay off their accounts or else their water rights would be suspended.<sup>324</sup> The Cuautla River junta also listed over two dozen users of the waters that owed taxes to the federal institution.<sup>325</sup> José Parres, the former governor of Morelos and later assistant secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, wrote that the Cuautla River junta president “complains that the majority of ejidal groups neither pay their outstanding debts nor want to contribute with their corresponding quotas for expenses to implement the current Ordinance.”<sup>326</sup> Without the support of the civil authorities, the junta presidents found there was little they could do to force villagers to pay up.

Federal officials and *campesinos* even used different terminology to describe water usage fees. Whereas junta employees referred to the payments as *cuotas* (quotas), which indicated a shared responsibility to cover the expenses of the irrigation system, villagers called them *contribuciones* (taxes), which reflected a burdensome charge demanded by government. Many agricultural communities already paid local associations of users and some taxes to the state government for the management of the irrigation system. “We believe it very onerous,” the residents of Villa de Ayala wrote, “to make three payments to plant our irrigable *ejido*; that is to say, one for the Water Junta, another for the *aguador* (water operator), and the third to the State Government,

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<sup>324</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57565, f. 16, Daniel Rojas to Dir. de Aguas, 24 November 1929.

<sup>325</sup> AHA, Aguas Nacionales, caja 697, exp. 8072, leg. 1, “Lista de los Ejidos Deudores a esta Junta de Aguas del Río de Cuautla,” 18 June 1934.

<sup>326</sup> AHA, Aguas Nacionales, caja 697, exp. 8072, José Parres to Depto. Agrario, 18 April 1934.

being that the first in no way benefits us.”<sup>327</sup> Agronomists recognized these differences of interpretation over payments and attempted to explain to peasants that quotas were not the same as taxes, but rather like *gabelas*, or duties.<sup>328</sup> Despite any efforts to reconcile these different terminologies, pueblos believed that the waters already belonged to them and therefore should not be taxed by the juntas.

Village pressure to make the federal juntas change tack prompted the state government to take a greater role in resolving water disputes between rival pueblos. For instance, the author of a memorandum on the Apatlaco River junta noticed in 1929 that an official engineer had cooperated with Governor Ambrosio Puente to construct splitter boxes in the irrigation network while disregarding the provisions of the junta. According to the report, the agronomist

has held several juntas in different places with [water] users and the governor of the State without letting the Junta know of the agreements made, with the result that the Junta does not know which [irrigation] works have been completed and which pueblos have contributed to those works and to what degree. Consequently, those pueblos have no appreciation for the Junta’s orders and summons, because matters related to the Apatlaco River’s waters are made directly between the cited Engineer or with the Governor of the State, who resolves everything without taking in to consideration the Juntas.<sup>329</sup>

Governor Vicente Estrada Cajigal also forged agreements between villages and advocated for reforming the water juntas.<sup>330</sup> In a 1931 letter to the Ministry of Agriculture, the governor stated first that the majority of the juntas neglected their principal objective of establishing an equitable distribution of water. Junta committee

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<sup>327</sup> AHA, Aguas Nacionales, caja 697, exp. 8072, Gregorio Carillo to José Parres, 6 April 1937.

<sup>328</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57564, ff. 84-85, Efraín A. Gutiérrez to Ignacio Rodríguez, 23 June 1932.

<sup>329</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2347, exp. 33899, f. 22, Memorandum not signed, 30 September 1929. See also AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, f. 188, Puente to Gumaro García de la Cadena, 18 June 1929.

<sup>330</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, ff. 280-281, Record of meeting between EstradaCajigal, representatives of Xoxocotla and San José Vista Hermosa, 10 March 1931.

members instead focused on collecting taxes rather than cleaning the canals and repairing irrigation works. Furthermore, Estrada Cajigal accused the council presidents of channeling rural funds to pay their own salaries over the needs to purchase construction materials for hydraulic system. The governor concluded by stating that the juntas had turned into “real red tape and inexorably weigh down on the scarce resources of the peasant Class, spending the totality of the money they collect on employee salaries, office expenses, and general expenses, always delaying construction works and silt removal from the canals.”<sup>331</sup> If the Ministry of Agriculture would not step in to resolve the situation, Estrada Cajigal believed, then the federal government should retreat from its attempts to control Morelos’s abundant water resources. Exercising restraint, the governor stopped short of making an argument for retaining local control of springs and rivers.

Yet the pressure placed on the federal government by both villagers and the governor did force the water councils to change course in the 1930s after realizing that the issue of taxes was alienating farmers from the juntas. In response, Mexico City sent Francisco Souza, an agrarian inspector, to the countryside to investigate the matter. Souza reconvened the Rio Apatlaco junta after several years in which it had not functioned and found the most pressing topic that farmers wanted to discuss was the over \$5,000 pesos of debt owed to the junta. Souza agreed to cancel nearly all the user debts and begin anew.<sup>332</sup> He then moved on to Cuautla and had success rallying *campesinos* to support the council’s efforts. The junta president agreed to lower the entire debts of the users from \$5,741 to \$1,455 pesos. “All the attendees expressed their gratitude for the

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<sup>331</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57529, ff. 276-278, Vicente Estrada Cajigal to Secrio. de Agricultura y Fomento, 25 November 1931.

<sup>332</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2347, exp. 33899, ff. 34-35, Francisco Souza to Director de Aguas, 19 October 1933.



economic relief they received and promised to be punctual thereafter in their payment of their quotas.”<sup>333</sup> Thus, it was not that *campesinos* rejected any form of taxation, but rather the financial burden imposed by the juntas was too disproportionate for them to sustain given their constant struggle to obtain good prices for the rice crop. When the Yautepec River junta gathered in 1933 to discuss the issue of debts, farmers did not even seek to cancel all the accounts, because they recognized it would be unjust not to pay the employees of the juntas and the administration of the waters would be a disaster. For instance, the hamlet of El Higuérón, which howled constantly concerning its lack of water, owed a total of 1,104 pesos to the Yautepec River junta. Yet the hamlet’s representatives showed more gratitude when the assembly agreed to lower their debt by nearly half the total amount. In all the junta gatherings, Souza noted that some 1,500 *campesinos* attended the assemblies and that “perfect order always prevailed, everyone behaving, without exception, eloquently disciplined and respectful.”<sup>334</sup> By negotiating these debts with *ejidatarios*, the fiscal basis of the juntas was diluted, allowing a greater degree of ejidal control over Morelos’s waterways.

Another way the juntas learned to earn pueblo approval was by helping to reconstruct the irrigation system, especially since Porfirian engineers had articulated Morelos’s hydraulic works in the nineteenth century to the state’s sugar haciendas. Many conflicts indeed arose in the 1920s and 1930s because the hydraulic infrastructure lacked splitter boxes (*cajas repartidoras*) to evenly distribute the liquid among villages, whose borders did not always align with former estate fields. The irrigation network, that is to say, was designed to serve a few dozen haciendas, not a hundred *ejidos* and thousands of

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<sup>333</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2367, exp. 33981, f. 60, Francisco Souza to Dir. de Aguas, 21 October 1933.

<sup>334</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2367, exp. 33981, ff. 63-64, Francisco Souza to Director. de Aguas, 21 October 1933.

users. An engineer noted that Anenecuilco's control of large amounts of water was due above all "to the lack of splitter boxes, and having no way of making the distribution properly proportionate, no one can be found responsible because it is not known which of all the users takes a larger amount."<sup>335</sup> Authorities thus admitted that the unequal distribution of water was not just due to villages taking the liquid resource (although this still occurred in numerous instances), but also to the lack of a fully articulated hydraulic infrastructure. In turn, the juntas often heeded village calls for construction of irrigation works. For example, Bonifacio García (Tlaltizapán), a new pueblo founded in the 1920s, complained that it received little water for its crops from the Temilpa canal. The Yautepec River junta responded by constructing hydraulic works that would bring the hamlet thirty more liters of water per second.<sup>336</sup> A year later, in 1929, the president of the Yautepec River junta noted that "construction of some [hydraulic] works have been carried out that tend to improve the distribution system of waters...something which until now had not been implemented."<sup>337</sup> The evidence also suggests that the construction of irrigation works ended long-standing conflicts between pueblos. After the Apatlaco River junta installed a splitter box to separate waters between San Marcos (Mazatepec) and Mexquemecan (Yecapixtla), even the municipal seat of Yecapixtla had fewer difficulties with distribution afterwards.<sup>338</sup> Similarly, the construction of a splitter box resolved a dispute between Cocoyoc (Yautepec) and the Atlihuayan hacienda.<sup>339</sup> The

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<sup>335</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57564, ff. 19-20, Rafael Ramírez to Jefe de Insp. de Aguas, 28 November 1931.

<sup>336</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 58026, f. 24, Carlos Ramos to Dirección de Aguas, 31 May 1928.

<sup>337</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57565, f. 13, Daniel Rojas to Dirección de Aguas, 27 September 1929.

<sup>338</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, ff. 128-133, Eliseo Minor to Director de Aguas, 19 September 1928.

<sup>339</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4388, exp. 58026, f. 149, Daniel Rojas to Dirección de Aguas, 15 January 1931.

construction of splitter boxes, in other words, had a rippling effect across the irrigation network that allowed the waters to flow more evenly. Villagers were thus not innately opposed to the central management of local waters; rather, different pueblos sought to use the federal juntas in different ways to manage their interests more effectively. What they all resisted, however, were abusive junta authorities, inept agronomists, and burdensome taxes placed on the usage of waters, especially when communities did not receive their allotted quantities of the liquid and the juntas were co-opted by local elites.

### ***Patterns of Village Struggles for Water***

The more water a pueblo could obtain, the more rice it could grow. This obvious fact explains why no issue caused as much conflict between villages as did the control of irrigation waters. Unlike demarcated lands and forests, water is of course a fluid substance, and therefore several communities must share a single source of the liquid. While the elevation of a village could influence whether or not a pueblo possessed easy access to large quantities of water, topography was not the only factor explaining struggles between rural communities. Internally cohesive villages, as this section will show, were better equipped to control large amounts of the irrigations waters at the expense of weaker and internally divided neighbors. It was these older “strong” pueblos, such as Anenecuilco, Tezoyuca and Tlacotepec, which wanted the federal juntas to maintain the status quo. In contrast, weaker and more divided pueblos, such as Chiconcuac and Zacualpan, actively sought the intervention of the juntas as leverage against powerful neighbors. By doing so, these communities dragged the federal juntas into local quarrels. Sometimes the councils diffused tensions among rival villages, while other times official involvement deepened the conflicts.

Such was the struggle between Tezoyuca and Chiconcuac. In the 1920s, both communities possessed between 200 and 300 inhabitants, and although they were located only three kilometers apart in the middle of the rice-growing country between Jojutla and Cuernavaca, Chiconcuac was part of the Xochitepec municipality, while Tezoyuca was located in the municipality of Jiutepec (today Emiliano Zapata). Despite the similar size of the two communities, Chiconcuac had formed as a settlement for a racially diverse and permanently settled working population on the hacienda of the same name during the nineteenth century. In other words, Chiconcuac was not a free village before the revolution, but rather an appendage of a hacienda and now officially a “congregation.” Tradition did not bind its inhabitants together to the same degree that it did in older neighboring communities.<sup>340</sup> There were over twenty new villages of this type in post-revolutionary Morelos, and they almost always inherited the name of the ex-hacienda from which they were built.<sup>341</sup> By contrast, communities such as Tezoyuca possessed a pre-Hispanic past and displayed a high degree of cohesion. Tezoyuca was unlike most villages in that it displayed few signs of internal discord or of abusive individuals dominating the village.<sup>342</sup> Meanwhile, in 1925, *campesinos* in Chiconcuac complained of the land committee president who was not fulfilling his duties and who distributed the best lands to his friends and relatives.<sup>343</sup> Both villages, of course, cultivated rice in the 1920s and constantly wrote to officials regarding the lack of water required to supply their paddies.

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<sup>340</sup> Two anthropological works on Chiconcuac include Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby, *Social Character in a Mexican Village: A Sociopschoanalytic Study* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 32; Lola Romanucci-Ross, *Conflict, Violence, and Morality in a Mexican Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>341</sup> Holt Büttner, “Evolución de las localidades,” 112-116.

<sup>342</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Tezoyuca (Emiliano Zapata), exp. 23/2986, leg. 1.

<sup>343</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Chiconcuac (Xochitepec), exp. 23/2985, leg. 2, f. 85, Gabriel Gutierrez and others to CNA, 4 May 1925.

Chiconcuac did not even have enough water for domestic use, and the liquid it did possess was highly sulphuric and not the desired fresh water (*agua dulce*). The village's plants did not grow properly with the sulphuric water, making some fifty hectares of their *ejido* unsuitable for irrigation. Meanwhile, Chiconcuac's search for water had brought the community into conflict with neighboring villages from as early as the early 1920s. The pursuit of water even led to a tragic story of a fifteen year-old girl falling to her death while carrying buckets of water from a distant well. "The engineers of the Local Agrarian [Commission]," Chiconcuac's residents lamented, "did nothing but come and take notes (*echaban trazos*), but they did not take note of the type of lands or if we enjoyed waters or not."<sup>344</sup> This situation turned desperate in 1925 when Chiconcuac lost its rice harvest for lack of irrigation. After investigating the matter, agrarian authorities soon singled out Tezoyuca, which had placed armed guards along several hydrants of a canal, as the culprit for numerous village complaints in the region regarding the lack of waters. The Local Agrarian Commission and the state governor ordered Tezoyuca to respect other pueblos' water rights and to construct its own canal to carry the liquid to the village.<sup>345</sup> Tezoyuca balked at the orders. Chiconcuac then turned to the federal junta that administered the Tetecalita Ravine and requested intervention on the community's behalf. In February 1927, the junta invited users of the ravine's waters to an assembly in order to resolve the region's irrigation difficulties. Tezoyuca, despite the official invitation, did not send representatives to the meeting and later refused to sign an accord that would have enforced each village's rights.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Chiconcuac (Xochitepec), exp. 23/2985, leg. 2, f. 98, Report by Jefe de Depto. Técnico, 6 November 1925.

<sup>345</sup> AHA, Aprovechamiento Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, f. 259, Ignacio Ochoa to Tezoyuca, 15 May 1926.

<sup>346</sup> AHA, Aprovechamiento Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, ff. 256-258, Record of assembly signed by Israel Gutiérrez, 16 February 1927.

Chiconcuac's leaders then decided to resolve the matter themselves after learning that officials could do little to force Tezoyuca to refrain from taking canal waters. Less than a month after the junta gathering, on 10 March 1927, the president of the Chiconcuac administrative committee, Marcelo García, and several villagers went to the countryside to close the hydrants from where Tezoyucans diverted the flow of the water. While sealing off an outlet at an irrigation ditch named San Agustín, the group from Chiconcuac was ambushed. Several armed Tezoyucans suddenly appeared and fired on the group, killing the land committee president and injuring three or four others.<sup>347</sup> Two villagers, Ramón Resendes and Roque Jaime, died later from their wounds. A detachment from the federal army was deployed to establish a neutral zone between the two pueblos, but no one from Tezoyuca was punished for the killings. To make matters worse, over the summer Tezoyuca still continued to take the region's waters. Meanwhile, Chiconcuac persisted in its pleas to officialdom, employing vivid language to describe its fields as "sown with corpses and the wounded." The aggrieved clamored for justice by concluding that "we have irrigated our homeland soil with blood."<sup>348</sup> Morelos's agrarian authorities indeed sympathized with Chiconcuac's plight, stating that "the petitions they make to the National Agrarian Commission are absolutely just."<sup>349</sup> Still, little was done to alleviate the pueblo's sufferings. Nearly fifty years later, villagers from Chiconcuac could still recall the tragic day of 10 March 1927.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> AHA, Aprovechamiento Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, f. 262, Guadalupe Sánchez to Israel Gutiérrez, 13 March 1927

<sup>348</sup> AGA, Dotación de Aguas, Chiconcuac (Xochitepec), exp. 33/4125, leg. 4, f. 66, Enrique Romero to Israel Gutiérrez, 16 August 1927.

<sup>349</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, f. 234, Ismael Gutierrez to Jefe de Depto. Agrario, 7 October 1927.

<sup>350</sup> Romanucci-Ross, *Conflict, Violence, and Morality*, 22.

In eastern Morelos, where water was less plentiful, Tlacotepec (Zacualpan) was another community that controlled large amounts of irrigation waters. The pueblo not coincidentally possessed a sizable militia that allowed the village to claim lands and waters beyond its borders. Zacualpan's residents complained that villagers from Tlacotepec illegally occupied their grazing lands, which forced herdsmen to search for pastures far from the village. Residents of Zacualpan wrote to President Ortiz Rubio in 1930:

We say that Tlacotepec is so ambitious and not only towards us, but also towards other Pueblos such as Hueyapan-Alpanoca and even in the State of Puebla they have taken lands. Our situation is so pitiful that we have seen with sadness that we are now worse off than in the time of the Hacendados.<sup>351</sup>

Zacualpan's statement that its plight had deteriorated to a condition worse than the pre-revolutionary period reveals with what bellicosity some villages behaved towards other communities in rural Morelos. If we are to believe Zacualpan, pueblos such as Tlacotepec now behaved like the "mini-haciendas" of post-revolutionary Morelos. This account is also surprising because Zacualpan, as the *cabecera* and a more populated settlement, had official administrative authority over the subject pueblo of Tlacotepec. The junta in charge of the Amatzinac Ravine ordered the municipal governments of Zacualpan, Jantetelco, and Jonacatepec to intervene and force Tlacotepec to stop hoarding water, but none of the local authorities would comply.<sup>352</sup>

Struggles over waters also occurred between different groups in the villages. Here again, as in the case of land disputes, local divisions emerged between *ejidatarios* and proprietary smallholders for access to hydraulic resources. Previous chapters have

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<sup>351</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Zacualpan (Zacualpan de Amilpas), exp. 23/3023, leg. 3, f. 76, Eligio Barreto to Ortiz Rubio, 19 August 1930.

<sup>352</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 128, Nicolás Oropeza to Dir. de Aguas, 14 January 1931; AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, f. 19, Jose Parres to Depto. Agrario, 14 May 1936.

shown how conflicts between these two distinct socioeconomic groups politically divided the lowland western municipal seats of Tetecala, Miacatlán, and Puente de Ixtla in the mid-1920s. Hueyapan (Tetela del Volcán) and Popotlán (Zacualpan), located in the northeastern highlands with smaller populations, also suffered the same divisions. For example, in Hueyapan, a conflict between private holders and the *ejido* over control of waters began in the 1920s and dragged on well into the mid-1930s without resolution. The disputes involved a group of *rancheros* taking irrigation waters allotted to local *ejidatarios* and lowland villages in Puebla. Then in 1936, *campesinos* accused the president of the Ventanas Ravine junta, Félix Soberanes, of favoring his brother with large quantities of water at the expense of the *ejidatarios*.<sup>353</sup> Similarly, in Popotlán, owners of small private farms were known for their hostility to local members of the *ejido* and for preventing lowland villages in eastern Morelos from accessing water.<sup>354</sup>

These eastern pueblos suffered more frequent water conflicts when compared to the southwestern region of the state due to the reduced availability of water and also to the presence of the García Pimentel family, which fielded white guards in the region throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>355</sup> For these reasons, eastern pueblos frequently appealed to the federal water juntas to arbitrate local disputes. In the east, tensions over access to water led both *ejidatarios* and the *hacendado* to destroy newly constructed irrigation works in order to prevent the other from accessing the liquid.<sup>356</sup> And even after the Tenango hacienda's lands were redistributed in 1937, conflicts persisted. Worse still,

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<sup>353</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4344, exp. 57652, ff. 181-183, Joaquín Serrano to Depto. de Aguas, 29 August 1936.

<sup>354</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, ff. 85-86, Joaquín Serrano to Dirección de Geografía, 16 June 1937.

<sup>355</sup> Valladares, *Cuando el agua se esfumó*, 87-88.

<sup>356</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 2408, exp. 34128, f. 60, Otilio Bonilla to Rep. de los usuarios de las aguas del Amatzinac, 24 April 1936.



in March 1940, during the dry and hot season, the lack of water in eastern lowland pueblos created a state of emergency. Agrarian authorities called on the federal army detachment to guard the hydraulic works in order to prevent highland communities from manipulating irrigation works, but six months later the soldiers had still not arrived.<sup>357</sup>

Ubiquitous water conflicts in eastern Morelos such as these may help to explain why the Amatzinac Ravine junta is the only one of the eleven councils in the state to produce a significant amount of documentation after 1934.<sup>358</sup> On the other hand, the remaining junta files in the AHA, including the Cuautla and Yautepec River juntas, house very little papers pertaining to the years after 1934, which is due probably to the reorganization of the agrarian bureaucracy under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). It is therefore plausible that the Ministry of Agriculture relinquished de facto control of the juntas to local and regional actors. In eastern Morelos, however, where the García Pimentel family posed a threat to villages and the state government, the Amatzinac Ravine junta remained under close federal tutelage. Thus, it may be that the Amatzinac Ravine junta was left intact under federal supervision in order to counter the influence of the García Pimentel family by giving the *ejidatarios* of eastern Morelos an ally in their struggles against local elites.

### ***The Federal Army***

The great question looming over the water conflicts in post-revolutionary Morelos revolved around who had the ultimate authority to control and manage the region's rivers and springs. Before the revolution, as noted, local actors exercised oversight over the region's waters, be they haciendas, municipal councils, or individual villages. With the

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<sup>357</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, ff. 278, 282, Lucio Hernández to Director de Aguas, 31 March 1940 and Lucio Hernández to Secro. de Agricultura, 4 August 1940.

<sup>358</sup> See AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, ff. 19-555.

establishment of the federal water juntas in 1926, however, the national government made a move to exert real power over Morelos's hydraulic system, prompting *ejidos* to enlist its support when they could. What developed then was a struggle between the different levels of government and their rural allies centered on water rights. The federal juntas, when repulsed by municipal obstinacy, called upon the army to force pueblos to pay their water taxes, which were so controversial that often the law could only be imposed at gunpoint. Meanwhile, some villages bypassed the juntas and sought to forge agreements with the state government concerning the administration of the waterways. Pueblos thus strategically used various levels of government to pursue their local interests.

The very fact that the junta presidents requested the federal army to intervene in irrigation conflicts reveals the importance of water in rural areas. But mobilizing troops to enforce junta regulations carried the risk of alienating locals from the water councils. The sight of soldiers in pueblos often frightened rural inhabitants and revived memories of the federal army pillaging and burning villages during the revolutionary campaigns of the 1910s. Agustín Aguilar, president of the Cuautla River junta, on several occasions considered using the army to force Anenecuilco, Villa de Ayala, and other pueblos to submit to federal authority but refrained from doing so because “to request it would resolutely break off relations between the said Junta and the [ejidal] committees and give rise to a series of difficulties and retaliations that could cause more than a serious accident.”<sup>359</sup> Instead, Aguilar called on the state governor, Ambrosio Puente, to exercise his personal influence and prestige to persuade pueblos to submit to the council's authority.

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<sup>359</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, f. 207, Israel Gutiérrez, 26 May 1927.

Unfortunately, the majority of the junta officials did not think in such strategic terms as did Aguilar. The bureaucrats' will to enforce the water ordinances, rather, led them to call on the assistance of the federal army and risk troubled relations with rural communities. Junta presidents were sometimes accompanied by a detachment of troops when they entered rural communities because they were aware that water issues could cause violence. Ten federal troops, for instance, accompanied the Amatzinac Ravine junta president to meet with villagers in the northeastern highland communities in 1931.<sup>360</sup> Still, mobilizing troops on behalf of the juntas was no easy task, especially during the Cristero War (1926–1929), when the federal army was occupied with the more urgent assignment of suppressing rebels rather than enforcing water regulations. Such was the case in 1928, when the Apatlaco River junta president lamented that “due to the great activities that the 33rd Chief of Operations is deploying against the gangs of bandits that invade the region, it has not been possible to continue applying the water suspension penalty for lack of the necessary escort.”<sup>361</sup> The mobilizations during the Cristero War left the entire Jojutla region without a single soldier to assist in enforcing irrigation ordinances.<sup>362</sup> Absent a show of force, junta presidents were weakened in their ability to resolve conflicts between rival users of the hydraulic system.

In nearly all cases, the most cited reason the junta presidents sought the intervention of the federal army was to force villages to pay their water taxes. The councils would first send written debt notices to individual pueblos threatening to cut off a community's water supplies if they did not pay up. If no response were made, the junta

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<sup>360</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 101, Andrés Bonilla to Director de Aguas, 19 March 1931.

<sup>361</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, f. 115, Eliseo Minor to Director de Aguas, 11 September 1928.

<sup>362</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, ff. 128-131, Eliseo Minor to Director de Aguas, 19 September 1928.

executive would then meet with a federal officer and request that troops accompany him to the countryside in order to close the community's canal hydrants. Such was the case in 1928, when the Apatlaco River junta shut off water to the *ejidos* of Xoxocotla, Atlacholaya, El Puente, Temixco, the Acatlipa military colony, and Temixco hacienda. The maneuver produced the desired results, and each of the above communities handed over hard cash to cover their debts. "In the face of this severe approach," the junta president proudly wrote to his superiors, the water users "immediately paid their quotas and respected all the provisions of the Junta."<sup>363</sup> The Apatlaco River junta had won a victory, but the show of force risked further estrangement of villages from the councils, and verbal promises to cooperate with federal officials in the management of the irrigation system were hallow. The fact remained that only on occasion could the water council presidents coordinate their efforts with the federal army to enforce the payment of debts. Most taxes went unpaid.

Mobilizing the army to enforce water regulations of course led to abuses and violence against villagers. Moyotepec, for instance, refused to obey the Cuautla River junta's orders to clean nearby canals. Troops afterwards went to the village and yanked peasants from their homes, forcing them out into the countryside to clear the waterways. The same federal officer went to San Vicente de Juárez and Tecomalco and "made them work by force," reported the junta president. All this occurred in the weaker and smaller pueblos of the Ayala municipality, which were easier to pick on than either Villa de Ayala or Anenencuilco. For their part, junta employees did little to aid the cause of centralization by employing the army in water disputes. Rather than attempting some form of negotiations, the resentments forced officials to dig in and shift blame to the

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<sup>363</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4330, exp. 57559, f. 130, Eliseo Minor to Director de Aguas, 19 September 1928.

villagers themselves for the state of affairs: “it is not the fault of this Office that they had not received their volumes of water,” concluded the Cuautla River junta president.<sup>364</sup>

Another danger of the army becoming involved in water conflicts was that troops could easily be drawn into disputes between *ejidatarios* and smallholders, who could offer bribes to soldiers in exchange for ensuring access to water. Take for instance the case of Popotlán. Eastern lowland villages cried foul when they learned that smallholders in Popotlán had paid off five or six soldiers in order to gain access to large amounts of water. When *ejidatarios* confronted the soldiers and inquired as to why they had made a deal with private holders in Popotlán, the troops responded by stating that “in a word, they were only here to support and sustain the said ‘Smallholders,’ threatening us with their carbines.”<sup>365</sup> The *campesinos*, outnumbered by arms, retreated to their lowland pueblos and proceeded to lobby federal authorities. Their cries were heeded, because a month later the Amatzinac River junta president informed federal officials that the dispute in Popotlán had been resolved after the *ejidatarios* and smallholders agreed to share equal amounts of the irrigation waters.<sup>366</sup> To what degree and frequency troops became involved in backroom deals to distribute water remains murky, but, at least in this case, *ejidatarios* could count on national officials to back them in disputes against local elites.

A detachment of soldiers could indeed regulate the flow of waters. By guarding strategic points along the canal network, specifically at irrigation works where valves could be altered to divert water away from a community, the juntas did have limited

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<sup>364</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4325, exp. 57531, f. 588, Agustín Aguilar to Director de Aguas, 5 February 1934.

<sup>365</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, f. 259, Lucio Hernández to Director de Aguas, 7 March 1939.

<sup>366</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 4359, exp. 57856, f. 258, Lucio Hernández to Director de Aguas, 3 April 1939.

success with using the army to lessen abuses. Experience had shown that the junta delegates charged with opening and closing irrigation valves could not be trusted to perform their tasks. These individuals, representatives of the pueblos, may in fact have been the central actors in illicitly controlling the flow of the waters. In any event, when federal troops guarded irrigation works, lowland pueblos complained less of shortages. During a brief four-day period, for instance, when soldiers stationed at the mouths of Amatzinac Ravine oversaw the distributor valves, lowland villages finally received their allotted amounts of water. But as soon the soldiers were removed from the network, troubles reemerged: “knowing that the said force retired,” grumbled an official, “the water detentions by highland pueblos have begun again.”<sup>367</sup> Using troops to intervene in water conflicts was, then, a temporary yet inadequate solution to a perennial problem. It carried the risks of alienating villagers from federal projects, but, if troops were deployed to simply guard the mouths of the canals, it could also benefit lower elevation communities.

Despite these efforts to federalize water management, the rush to make a green revolution in Morelos had mixed results by 1940. That year, village ejidal leaders and state officials met at a state agrarian congress held in Cuernavaca to discuss the most salient problems facing agricultural workers. An agrarian commission stated before the attendees that since the revolution, pueblos had planted their fields without regards to market fluctuations or a system of crop rotation. Some years the harvests were so abundant with foodstuffs that it drove down prices and lefts farmers demoralized. Moreover, absent a centrally planned system of crop rotation, the valley soils would soon

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<sup>367</sup> AHA, Aprovechamientos Superficiales, caja 1902, exp. 28630, f. 100, Andrés Bonilla to Director de Aguas, 23 March 1931.

began to lose their fertility.<sup>368</sup> But most of all, the issue of irrigation waters dominated the topics of discussion. Governor Elipido Perdomo admitted to the attendees that “the waters have been a very difficult problem in communities.” Like other officials at the congress in Cuernavaca, Perdomo cited the hacienda’s system of organized cultivation as the model to build the *ejido*. He told the village agrarian leaders gathered in the hall that “the use of waters should be carried out like the Hacienda did it. The hacienda, we have understood, irrigated all the fields with canals by the hour and it was the hacienda that was the only landlord (*patrón*) that distributed the waters.”<sup>369</sup> The governor promoted a new system of crop rotation and advocated for further water regulations. Rather than continue the disorganized practice of higher elevation pueblos appropriating waters at will, the governor proposed to lead an effort that would permit each village to open its hydrants at certain hours of the day. It was an acknowledgment by the political elites that the hacienda had managed the state’s hydraulic resources more efficiently than the *ejido*. The governor’s plan, of course, whiffed of centralization and more meddling in pueblo affairs. Whether Cuernavaca was able to establish an irrigation model in the 1940s and 1950s based on the Porfirian hacienda’s usage of water remains unclear; but the concerns at the convention reveal that even by the end of the post-revolutionary period, de facto control over Morelos’s waters still resided in the locales.

The issue of water continued to dominate the discussions at the 1940 convention. Village after village expressed their concerns over never having enough of the liquid for their plantings and animals. Finally, an official tired of discussing the topic declared,

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<sup>368</sup> AHIDEM, Tierras, caja 753, leg. 2, “Dictamen que la Comisión de Agricultura somete a la consideración del Honorable Congreso de Comisariados Ejidales en el Estado,” Gregorio Díaz, 15 May 1940.

<sup>369</sup> AHIDEM, Tierras, caja 753, leg. 2, p. 7, 8, “Versión taquigráfica del Primer Congreso Estatal de Comisariados Ejidales, que tuvo lugar en la ciudad de Cuernavaca, Morelos, durante los días quince y dieciséis de mayo de mil novecientos cuarenta.”

“look, *compañeros*, the water problem is widespread across the State...[but] I believe we have sufficiently discussed the matter, right?”<sup>370</sup> The official thus admitted tacitly that the dilemmas involving water distribution had overwhelmed the state government. The failure of the Cuernavaca and Mexico City to provide equal access to the irrigation network thereby posed the greatest obstacle to fulfilling the agrarian ideals of the *zapatista* revolution. Yet the national state, like *callista* policy required, had overseen ejidal efforts to shake off municipal control and become rice-growing, petty commercial entities, which strengthened pueblo control over Morelos’s natural resources at the expense of local elites.

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<sup>370</sup> AHIDEM, Tierras, caja 753, leg. 2, p. 6, “Apuntes de los asuntos tratados en el congreso de comisariados ejidales que se verificó en la ciudad de Cuernavaca durante los días 15 y 16 del presente mes de mayo de 1940.”



## Chapter IV: Federal Schools and the Segunda Cristiada in Morelos

As part of President Calles's state-building drive in the mid-1920s, Morelos became one of the first entities to establish a federal primary school in all its villages, further demonstrating both the *callista* commitment to the region.<sup>371</sup> By 1940, 194 rural schools functioned in the state.<sup>372</sup> For villagers, federal schools promoted by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) facilitated reconstruction of the pueblos in the 1920s, and in the mid-1930s public classrooms became the sites where rural inhabitants demanded a place for local religion within the anticlerical state. Schools, moreover, provided rural women with a forum to participate in the public affairs of the pueblos and to engage the post-revolutionary state. Beyond imparting basic skills such as reading and writing, many school-sponsored cooperatives raised enough capital to create micro-industries and sell goods to villagers at lower prices than could local merchants. School gardens, in particular, thrived in many *morelense* pueblos and served as laboratories for rice cultivation. The SEP thus facilitated the pueblos' green revolution and benefitted women, and through participation in education committees many locals exercised control over village pedagogy. For these reasons, *campesinos* in Morelos largely welcomed federal schools and teachers in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1934, however, during the rise of *cardenismo*, national politicians reformed the curriculum of primary schooling and introduced anticlericalism into rural classrooms under the guise of "socialist education." The government's action provoked a backlash in the countryside, as attendance in classrooms plummeted and religious fervor within pueblos boiled over. To

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<sup>371</sup> Álvaro Obregón's presidential administration, for example, appointed two former *zapatistas*, Carlos M. Peralta and Francisco Figueroa, as chief administrative assistant of the SEP and subsecretary of education, respectively. Mary K. Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), 143.

<sup>372</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 43, exp. 39, f. 23, Report by Elpidio López, 18 December 1940.

make matter worse, a small-scale but significant rebellion erupted in eastern Morelos, where on various occasions insurgents killed several teachers. This “Second” Cristiada in Morelos, or “La Segunda” as the religious upheaval of 1930s came to be known in Mexico, contributed to President Lázaro Cárdenas’s decision in 1936 to roll back anticlericalism in schools, thus recreating the pact between the federal government and *zapatismo*.<sup>373</sup> As a result of the struggle, the pueblos forced the government to make a place for local religion to coexist alongside secular schools, and attendance in classrooms resumed normal levels.

Recent literature on post-revolutionary schooling has emphasized the negotiated character of the SEP’s project in the countryside, but these studies use either political or cultural approaches to explore rural schooling,<sup>374</sup> and few discuss the case of Morelos.<sup>375</sup> Cultural historians see the school as a meeting point in which a hegemonic revolutionary

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<sup>373</sup> The few works that explore specifically the Segunda Cristiada reveal the decentralized nature of resistance to official clericalism in the 1930s. See Ben Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 18-19, 120-143, 202-204; Enrique Guerra Manzo, ‘El fuego sagrado. La segunda Cristiada y el caso de Michoacán (1931-1938)’ *Historia Mexicana*, 55: 2 (2005), 513-575; Jean Meyer, ‘La Segunda (cristiada) en Michoacán’, in Francisco Miranda (ed.), *La cultura purhé*, (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 1981); Meyer, *La cristiada*, vol. 1, 323-377.

<sup>374</sup> For political approaches, see Rockwell, *Hacer escuela*; Paul Gillingham, “Ambiguous Missionaries: Rural Teachers and State Facades in Guerrero, 1930-1950,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 22, no. 2 (2006): 331-360; Engracia Loyo Bravo, ed., *La Casa Del Pueblo y el maestro rural mexicano: antología* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública : Ediciones El Caballito, 1985). For cultural approaches, see Vaughan, *Cultural Politics*; Stephen E. Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution: Forging State and Nation in Chiapas, 1910-1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Andrae M. Marak, *From Many, One: Indians, Peasants, Borders, and Education in Callista Mexico, 1924-1935* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009); Christopher R. Boyer, “La revolución inventada. Salvador Sotelo y el papel del ‘Intelectual Local’ en el Michoacán Posrevolucionario,” *Estudios Michoacanos* 9 (2001): 169–195; Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*.

<sup>375</sup> Works that discuss education in Morelos include Antonio Padilla Arroyo, “Atmósfera y escenarios de la vida educativa: Los años treinta del siglo XX en el estado de Morelos,” in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8; Adriana Adán Guadarrama, “La Escuela Normal Rural de Oaxtepec: Educación y vida cotidiana, 1934-1940,” in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8; Giovanni de Jesús Orea, “El caso de la escuela de Calderón, 1934-1940,” in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8; Carlos Gallardo Sánchez, *Escuelas y maestros morelenses hasta el zapatismo* (Cuernavaca: Congreso del Estado de Morelos, 2004).

culture was created, while political studies tend to see a struggle of interests. This chapter, by contrast, integrates political and cultural approaches to show that federal schools were both economic and cultural assets for *morelense* pueblos.<sup>376</sup> The first section demonstrates the various ways in which federal schools promoted rural reconstruction and community revival. Specifically in the case of Morelos, SEP gardens, where rice and other commercial crops were grown, developed into valuable economic assets for *campesinos* and served as unique laboratories where locals learned new agriculture techniques. Meanwhile, village women, the subject of the second section, actively supported federal schools and SEP campaigns to improve classroom attendance, organize village festivals, promote public health, establish kindergartens, and purchase corn mills. Women's contributions to pueblo education enhance our understanding of their roles in the *zapatista* movement—a topic relegated to the background in most histories of the local revolution.<sup>377</sup> During the Segunda, village women in Morelos emerged as one of the main antagonists of the government's anticlerical policies, the subject of the third and final section. Pious women did not join the armed rebels in the mountains, but, like their predecessors of the 1910s and later the *jaramillistas*, women in the pueblos formed clandestine cells to organize the campaigns against socialist education. Examining the federal campaigns to “nationalize” the countryside and “defanaticize” *campesino* culture by discouraging popular devotions will also allow for some analysis of the neglected subject of local religion in rural Morelos.<sup>378</sup> The absence of scholarly attention to religion as a component of *zapatismo* is surprising given that

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<sup>376</sup> Waters, “Revolutionizing Childhood” is one of the few works to offer a blend of both methodologies.

<sup>377</sup> María Herrerías Guerra, *Construcciones de género en la historiografía zapatista (1911-1919)* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de las Mujeres de la Equidad de Género, 2010) has provided a needed discussion of gender and *zapatismo* during its armed phase. See also Rocío Suárez López, “Las mujeres de Morelos en las luchas sociales del Siglo XX,” in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8.

<sup>378</sup> Friedlander, “The Secularization of the Cargo System” argues that post-revolutionary education gradually secularized the colonial Catholic *cargo* system of Hueyapan, Morelos.

Morelos had a history of religious dissidence and became a hotbed of opposition to federal anticlerical policies in the 1930s.<sup>379</sup> It may seem odd that Morelos reacted against state anticlericalism in the 1930s but not the violent persecution of Catholics in the 1920s, but, as we shall see, the antireligious policies of 1934 affected the state in a manner that those of the 1920s did not, during the Cristero War especially, which explains the region's hostility to socialist education.

### ***Federal Schools and Village Reconstruction***

To many villagers the establishment of a SEP school symbolized the physical and cultural resurrection of a pueblo. Until then, decay and the struggle for subsistence had marked rural communities since the end of the armed revolution. Such was the case in Tlaltizapán, where Zapata once headquartered his army. Before the construction of a SEP school in 1926, a federal employee observed that “this pueblo is a pile of ruins, being inhabited by very few people, as its sources of work, plantings and fruit orchards, are almost abandoned.”<sup>380</sup> Observers again and again commented on the poverty of the region in the 1920s: “The eternal and stifling economic problem of the state prevents us from deploying a greater impulse to our propositions,” the head of the SEP in Morelos typed.<sup>381</sup> State and municipality-run schools in the pueblos were little more than makeshift shelters. In the village of Cuentepec (Temixco), one report described the

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<sup>379</sup> For a work that explores the popular religious culture of *zapatismo*, see Victor Hugo Sánchez Reséndiz, *De rebeldes fe: Identidad y formación de la conciencia zapatista*, 2. ed. (Cuernavaca: Instituto de Cultura de Morelos, 2006). See also Redfield, *Tepoztlán* and Massimo De Giuseppe, ‘Piedad para el indio, el Atila del Sur y las banderas de Guadalupe: los Católicos y el fenómeno zapatista durante la Revolución’, in Miguel Ángel Romero Cora (ed.) *Libro Anual del ISEE*, 13 (Mexico City: Instituto Superior de Estudios Eclesiásticos, 2011), pp. 171-196; María Alicia Puente Lutteroth, “Política, cultura y religión en la sociedad morelense de siglo XX: un acercamiento a la movilización de identidades,” in *La cruz de maíz: política, religión e identidad en México: entre la crisis colonial y la crisis de la modernidad*, eds. María Isabel Campos Goenaga and Massimo De Giuseppe (Mexico City: Escuela Nacional de Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011); Jennifer Schepher Hughes, *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix: Lived Religion and Local Faith from the Conquest to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>380</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 165, exp. 1, f. 90, Report by Agente #10, 26 January 1926.

<sup>381</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, f. 10, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 5 March 1929.

classroom where two teachers taught thirteen boys and thirteen girls as a “corridor with bad roofing made of palm leaves.”<sup>382</sup> The old school building had no roof, doors, or windows. In Tepoztlán, the federal school was an annex of the parish church in good condition and with plumbing, but the site was not even big enough to house all the students, and one teacher held class on a patio outside of the building under a leafy plumb tree.<sup>383</sup> That parents sent their children to learn in such inadequate classrooms reveals the local commitment to education, since this was all they could afford to build by way of schools. Yet at the same time, villagers actively petitioned national officials for greater involvement in pueblo education, and once again the *callista* system responded.

Before the federal push to construct new educational facilities in Morelos in 1926, it was not uncommon for village parents’ associations to lament to national authorities that the state and municipal governments lacked sufficient income to sustain teachers’ salaries and fund schools.<sup>384</sup> In fact, rather than simply appropriating a pre-existing state education system, as Rockwell claims occurred in Tlaxcala, the SEP built more schools in rural Morelos than it took over.<sup>385</sup> This of course was probably due to the disintegration of the state and municipal governments during the fighting of the revolution, which in turn obliged the Sonoran regime to reconstruct the region’s primary school system. In any event, in 1923, a year after the first few federal educators arrived in Morelos, the state recorded a mere thirteen teachers in twelve rural schools and an enrollment of only 744 students. Thus, while well-intentioned, Obregón’s commitment

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<sup>382</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, f. 10, Report by José Pedro Durany, 23 February 1926.

<sup>383</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, f. 54, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 25 November 1929.

<sup>384</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 8, ff. 6-7, 8, 9, 10, 15 Andrés Romero to Secrio. de Edu. Pública, 13 May 1926, Pres. Consejo Mun. to Secrio. de Instrucción Pública, 17 May 1926, Pres. Consejo Mun. to Secrio. de Edu. Pub., 18 May 1926, Jefe del Depto. to Rosendo Alpizan, 1 June 1926, Prof. Vicente Cortés to Jefe de Personal de Depto. de Cultura Indígena, 8 July 1926.

<sup>385</sup> Rockwell, *Hacer escuela*.

to rural education in the state was negligible; in January 1926, at the height of the state's electoral upheaval, Morelos still only had thirty-two federal rural schools.<sup>386</sup> Later that year, however, President Calles and the national authorities responded to *morelenses'* petitions by increasing the funds and resources allocated for new classrooms in Morelos. From 1930, when the state government's finances returned to order, Cuernavaca also began to promote and build village classrooms. By 1934, the number of rural schools in the state reached over 140.<sup>387</sup> That year Cuernavaca and Mexico City also signed an agreement to federalize the remaining thirty-two schools functioning under the state government's jurisdiction. Official records, meanwhile, claimed that ninety-nine percent of the school-age population attended federal classrooms. Although this official figure probably exaggerates the percentage of enrollment in SEP classrooms, it is clear that the post-revolutionary schooling system was outperforming its Porfirian predecessor, which enrolled less than half of Morelos's school-age population.<sup>388</sup>

Constructing a site for the school and furnishing it laid the groundwork of the federal project. Usually the SEP invested roughly 1,500 pesos in materials per school, while the villagers themselves volunteered to build the edifice. After 1927, the state government also donated to federal schools materials such as Mexican flags and construction supplies.<sup>389</sup> In general, national officials reported that villagers were "eager to have a school for the education of their children, promising to give security for the teacher, supplying him with a house and room, a site for the school, furniture, and fields

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<sup>386</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 4, Illegible to Jefe del Departamento de Escuelas Rurales, 2 February 1926.

<sup>387</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 29, ff. 9-11, Ignacio Ramírez, 11 May 1934.

<sup>388</sup> Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class*, 158, 278, 143.

<sup>389</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 41, f. 8, Report by Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, 2 August 1933.

for sports and cultivation.”<sup>390</sup> Likewise, after visiting forty-two federal schools in pueblos around Cuernavaca and the southern hotlands, the SEP inspector commented,

In each visited place I gathered together the Authorities and a majority of parents, holding very crowded Juntas at nights to explain the needs of the schools and how to fulfill them...In all places I was received with shows of joy, by the children and the [adult] residents, as well as I was sent off with cheerful demonstrations.<sup>391</sup>

Perhaps the inspector exaggerated the warmth he received from the villagers in order to please his superiors, but the description of his visits stands in stark contrast to the reception given concurrently to teachers in other regions of the country such as Michoacán, where villagers sometimes chased federal teachers out of the pueblo.<sup>392</sup> In places where the federal project did not go well in Morelos, the SEP said so; thus not all positive reports were fabrications. Events surrounding the actual opening of the school were similar to what occurred when a community received its land grant: locals gathered for an official ceremony and gave speeches to celebrate the revival of a pueblo institution. The inhabitants of Tlacotenco, for instance, invited neighboring residents in the municipality of Tepoztlán and also the governor to attend the school’s inauguration. Although unable to attend, the governor sent representatives to join municipal authorities, agrarian committee members, and militia chiefs in the inaugural ceremony, which included singing, musicals, sports, and speeches in both Spanish and Náhuatl.<sup>393</sup> Like the celebration of a land grant, the festivities marked a new chapter in a village’s institutional life and represented public displays of the alliance being forged in the 1920s between rural Morelos and Mexico City.

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<sup>390</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 47, exp. 32, f. 2, Report by C.J. Nápoles, 26 July 1928.

<sup>391</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 39, f. 19, Report by Leopoldo Rodríguez Calderón, 31 March 1933.

<sup>392</sup> For education in Michoacán, see Matthew Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity in Mexico’s Cristero Rebellion: Michoacán, 1927-29* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 80-104; Becker, *Setting the Virgin*; Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*.

<sup>393</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 3, exp. 7, f. 13, Report by Carlos García, 13 November 1929.

After the construction of the school, the acquisition of benches, desks, blackboard, and chalk, and a library were the first necessities to fill the edifice. The SEP recorded Morelos as having not a single library in 1920, but by 1923 the state possessed seven public libraries together containing over 1,000 volumes.<sup>394</sup> Although print media continued to trickle into rural communities, many schools still lacked book repositories. In order to provide at least some sort of current literature for classrooms, the SEP director of federal education stationed in Morelos made sure the official rural school magazine, *El Sembrador*, circulated to the distant villages of the region. If communities lay off the mail route, teachers collected the magazines at the SEP meeting held in Cuernavaca every fortnight and carried them back with them to the distant classrooms.<sup>395</sup> *El Sembrador* contained all types of official advice with illustrations for *campesinos*, such as how to improve agricultural techniques, raise livestock, and fight smallpox. It also included poetry that celebrated Mexico's Indian heritage; articles that touted women's roles in national history, and even sheet music to learn patriotic songs.<sup>396</sup> Once the school was up and running, locals took pride in the new facility by beautifying the school's property. In Amatlán (Tepoztlán), for example, the teacher sent the children out to the countryside one day to gather plates of red tile (*teja*) to adorn the grassy area around the school garden.<sup>397</sup> Federal schools thus were designed to assist villagers in reconstruction of the countryside and especially emphasized good farming practice.

Official reports indeed painted a rosy picture of the SEP's early accomplishments in rural Morelos, which in turn presents methodological issues for historians interpreting

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<sup>394</sup> *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no.4 (1923).

<sup>395</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, f. 58, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 25 November 1929.

<sup>396</sup> SEP, *El Sembrador*, no. 2-8, 1929.

<sup>397</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, f. 19, Report by José Pedro Durany, 8 March 1926.



the rural reception of federal schools, given that teachers and inspectors had clear motivations to want to appease their superiors in Mexico City. The aggregation of dozens of reports by different SEP inspectors and state directors, however, suggests that the reports were not just empty rhetoric, especially when they can be corroborated with letters written by *campesinos* themselves. In many respects, primary schooling in post-revolutionary Morelos—be it under municipal, state, or federal jurisdiction—formed a component of the pueblo’s institutional identity. Put another way, elementary schools provided a sovereign space for parents to control children’s pedagogy and reach out to the federal state. Support was palpably real. In Morelos, for example, it was not unusual for local families to supplement a federal teacher’s pay, even if the amount they offered was little more than a peon’s wages. Such was the case in San Andrés Cuauhtempan (Tlayacapan) and Tepetlixpita (Totolapan), where residents subsidized the *maestras*’ daily one-peso federal salaries with an additional daily peso in the first case and \$12.50 per month in the second.<sup>398</sup> Meanwhile, in the hamlet of San Antonio (Ayala), parents gave the instructor fifty cents per day in order stimulate her dedication to the classroom.<sup>399</sup> Locals therefore considered the teacher as a member of the community, deserving of community assistance, and it was also not uncommon for them to build a new house for instructors, or in the case of Popotlán, simply to convert an old jail into a home for the federal teacher.<sup>400</sup> In order to flourish, then, federal schools required and often received collective support from a pueblo’s residents, not just national funding, to ensure that classrooms were furnished with adequate supplies and the teachers were paid.

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<sup>398</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, f. 62, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 5 December 1929.

<sup>399</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 11, f. 36, Report by Clemente J. Nápoles, 3 August 1936.

<sup>400</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 41, f. 32, Report by Clemente J. Nápoles, 4 July 1932.

Another crucial source of funding for local education came from SEP-sponsored cooperatives, which were successful particularly in Morelos, where most schools controlled garden plots. Parents took the lead in raising money to purchase new technologies and manufacturing materials from the city in order to produce and sell goods locally. Some cooperatives even purchased entertainment devices to enliven the cultural atmosphere of the pueblo. An inspector visiting San Gabriel (Amacuzac) noted that the village school building

was perfectly repaired, being very agreeable for its latrine and all its whitewashed walls...this improvement was achieved with the cooperation of the adults and the community. With the help of the adult cooperative, the school itself bought a Victorola [phonogram] which is very useful to liven up the festivals and social reunions.<sup>401</sup>

The novelty of radios, too, attracted newcomers to the schools.<sup>402</sup> Beyond music for leisure, cooperatives acquired items for homemade industries. In the highland pueblo of Hueyapan (Tetela de Volcán), members of the local education committee purchased looms so the students could learn to make blankets and *cambaya* fabric. They even brought in an “expert worker in textiles” from the industrial town of Atlixco, Puebla to show the students how to operate the looms.<sup>403</sup> Finally, material necessary for soap production was another common item that early schools promoted.<sup>404</sup>

By the 1930s, many of the SEP-sponsored cooperatives were selling enough goods locally that they began to cut into the profits of privately-owned village stores.

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<sup>401</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, f. 51, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 25 November 1929.

<sup>402</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5787, exp. 4-5-8-20, f. 25, Report by Donaciano Munguía, 11 March 1936. Yet still in 1934, most pueblos did not possess a radio, despite the SEP’s plan to broadcast classes through the airwaves. And the few communities that obtained a radio either lacked electricity to power the apparatus or could only dial into stations based in the southern United States. AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 8, f. 2, Ignacio Ramírez to Rafael Ramírez, 23 February 1934.

<sup>403</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, f. 55, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 25 November 1929.

<sup>404</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, ff. 24-28, Report by José Pedro Durany, 15 March 1926.

Lucrative cooperatives, in other words, were freeing *campesinos* from dependency on merchants, who often doubled as rural money lenders. The economic power of several profitable cooperatives in fact angered rural elites involved in village commerce.<sup>405</sup> In this regard, the schools generated conflict. Opposition was strong enough in several communities that the school cooperatives, such as the one in Emiliano Zapata, were liquidated after local merchants confronted and threatened teachers and parents.<sup>406</sup> In Bonifacio García (Cuernavaca) one day in 1936, a group of men armed with machetes confronted the federal school teacher over the SEP cooperative. The men were not *ejidatarios* or parents of school children, but rather individuals with a stake in the village store. Armed with machetes, the assailants demanded that the teacher relinquish control of the school, declaring that it was not a business and that it cut into the sales of the local store. The teacher, who claimed the municipal president of Tlaltizapán had sent the assailants, fled the pueblo as the group proceeded to remove all supplies from the school.<sup>407</sup> This type of heated local opposition to federal schools shows that the educational system in Morelos was working well economically by cutting out the traditional middlemen of the pueblos, thereby undermining their roles in the community.

The federal campaign to construct public works began in earnest under Calles and was also embraced by rural Morelos, even though public investment facilitated political centralization. Communications between the state and the rest of country, for example, expanded with the spread of telephone lines, radio equipment, and the mail service during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>408</sup> In Chavarría (Coatlán del Río) residents were able to build a

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<sup>405</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5787, exp. 13, f. 3, Report by Conrado R. García, 20 December 1935.

<sup>406</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 13, f. 65, Report by Eliseo Bandala, 20 August 1937.

<sup>407</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 41, f. 4, Margarito Vázquez Bazán to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 26 August 1936.

<sup>408</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 1791, exp. 22, f. 1, Rómulo Hernández to Ignacio Ramírez, 22 January 1928.

school after an electric company paid the village over 1,000 pesos to allow electric lines to pass over the community's *ejido*.<sup>409</sup> On the other side of the state in the northeastern highlands, Tlacotepec's control of abundant irrigation waters and extensive lands allowed the village to open a technology museum to teach science to the region's students.<sup>410</sup> With more resources in the 1930s, the state government went beyond donating furniture, Mexican flags, and supplies to schools and helped pueblos such as Anenecuilco and Tlacotepec obtain telephone lines.<sup>411</sup> Yet perhaps most important to the integration of rural communications were roads, which reduced the cost of transporting goods and provided villagers with easier access to national markets. As a sign of their desire for paved roadways, pueblo inhabitants often volunteered their labor to assist the federal government in constructing nearby highways.<sup>412</sup> A report in 1929 noted that all over the state *campesinos* worked to pave the roadways in order to make them passable during the rainy season.<sup>413</sup> These activities show that villages sought to interact with the outside world rather than isolate themselves from it. By doing so, rural inhabitants helped to give Morelos one of the best statewide communication systems in Mexico.<sup>414</sup>

SEP schools in the 1920s encountered "bottom-up" support in Morelos because they went beyond imparting basic classroom skills such as reading and writing and also taught children the latest agricultural techniques and market skills. Put differently, the

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<sup>409</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5787, exp. 13, ff. 6-7, Report by Conrado R. García, 20 December 1935.

<sup>410</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 41, f. 54, Report by Clemente J. Nápoles, 12 November 1932.

<sup>411</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, f. 44, Report by Efrén Ramírez, not dated.

<sup>412</sup> Waters, "Revolutionizing Childhood" and Wendy Waters, "Remapping Mexico: Road Construction and Nation Building in Postrevolutionary Mexico," in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, eds. Mary K. Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>413</sup> AHIEDM, caja 1, exp. 7, f. 8, "Estudio Agrológico del Estado de Morelos," 1929.

<sup>414</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 32, f. 21, Report by Donaciano Munguía, 1935.

SEP facilitated the pueblos' green revolution. In most villages, the agrarian committees reserved a plot of the *ejido* so that students could cultivate a garden and sell the harvest in order to raise funds for the classroom. Again, this contrasted with the experience of teachers and inspectors in Michoacán such as María del Refugio "Cuca" García, who often had to request *ejidos* on behalf of villagers.<sup>415</sup> Many schools even obtained an irrigated field on which they experimented with and grew lucrative commercial crops, a fact which made federal pedagogy in Morelos truly unique, because these gardens were a far cry from the digging patches of Michoacán and elsewhere. Twenty-nine schools in the Cuautla region, for example, possessed an average of two and a quarter hectares of cultivable fields.<sup>416</sup> In Oaxtepec (Yautepec), a pueblo rich in water resources, the president of the ejidal administration gave the local federal school what appears to have been a state high of seven and a half hectares of irrigated soils.<sup>417</sup> Negotiations between the SEP and the ejidal assemblies over these plots usually involved little haggling. Such was the experience of the SEP inspector of the Cuernavaca zone, who convinced the residents of Chapultepec (Cuernavaca) to persuade the local agrarian leaders to turnover to the school two hectares of land with twenty-seven fruit trees for the students to attend.<sup>418</sup> This was a generous offer, and something similar occurred in Xoxocotla (Puente de Ixtla), where the municipal authority (who did not speak Spanish), village agrarian leaders, and the local education assembly met and agreed to allow the school to manage two irrigated hectares. Several farmers even volunteered to plow and sow the field at the soonest opportunity.<sup>419</sup> Such cooperation between different actors in the

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<sup>415</sup> Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, 137-138.

<sup>416</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, f. 44, Report by Efrén Ramírez, not dated.

<sup>417</sup> AHA, Aprovechamiento Superficiales, caja 4324, exp. 57529, f. 47, Carlos Ramos to Director de Aguas, 17 August 1928.

<sup>418</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, f. 41, Report by José Pedro Durany, 22 April 1926.

<sup>419</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 11, exp. 3, f. 5, Report by J. Alcázar R., 24 October 1926.

pueblos signifies the degree to which villagers shared a common view that SEP schools were important assets to reviving rural communities. By 1933, three quarters of Morelos's rural schools possessed a good plot of land. An official report boasted that "the plots our schools possess have been cultivated in the smartest way possible," adding that official personnel always encouraged locals to make it the best kept garden in the community.<sup>420</sup>

Cash crops, such as rice, peanuts, and fruits, were planted on the valuable irrigated plots, further revealing the *morelense* dedication to commercial agriculture.<sup>421</sup> In 1940 alone, the school gardens in Morelos raised a total of 20,833 pesos.<sup>422</sup> The schools garden program thrived in especially water-rich pueblos that could grow rice: in 1935, the SEP garden in Tezoyuca raised 200 pesos, with an additional 292 pesos raised in Tenextepango (Ayala), 350 pesos in Temimilcingo (Tlaltizapán), and 400 pesos Tepetzingo (Emiliano Zapata).<sup>423</sup> Hence, it was not so much the actual sums raised that were impressive but that they could be used to buy useful school items and give students farming apprenticeships. As early as 1926, residents in Tilzapotla (Puente de Ixtla) had reserved an irrigated two-hectare field for students to grow peanuts.<sup>424</sup> In Tlalquitenango, students cultivated rice on the school's plot in order to raise money for the construction of an open-air theatre.<sup>425</sup> Meanwhile, in San Juan Ahuehuevo (Ayala), villagers donated profits from the rice harvest to purchase carpentry tools required to

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<sup>420</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 38, f. 8, Report by R. García R., 30 October 1933.

<sup>421</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, ff. 34-38, Report by José Pedro Durany, 29 March 1926.

<sup>422</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 43, exp. 39, f. 21, Report by Elpidio Lopez, 18 December 1940.

<sup>423</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 13, f. 27, Report by Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, March 1936.

<sup>424</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, f. 36, Report by José Pedro Durany, 29 March 1926.

<sup>425</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 39, f. 2, Report by Antonio (illegible), 2 November 1934.

maintain the school edifice.<sup>426</sup> Ahuehueyo's school raised another 125 pesos to purchase new furniture for classrooms after selling the garden's harvest.<sup>427</sup> The school in Tepoztlán, located at the base of the Ajusco Mountains, possessed one and a half hectares of land, of which a full hectare was devoted to cultivating mulberries, cotton, and bananas. Teachers and parents also led efforts to build henhouses and dovecots to produce eggs and meat and apiaries for bees' honey and pollination. Even in the northern highlands, where a lack of irrigation waters made the school gardens less lucrative, villagers planted vegetables and corn on the plots. Moreover, SEP instructors taught reforestation techniques to combat the destruction of wooded hillsides. In 1940, 800 fruit trees were planted on the deforested slopes of northern Morelos and 254 more in the villages to adorn the streets.<sup>428</sup> SEP schools in every region of the state, then, had developed into laboratories for pueblo agriculture and conservation. Federal schools in Morelos, that is to say, were more advanced than in many other states and had a petty but real commercial orientation.

The school gardens were truly experimental, because the profits derived from the harvests were sometimes used to create village kindergartens (*Jardines de Niños*) where mothers could leave their infants while helping their husbands in distant fields. The idea for this type of rural childcare service had been around since the creation of the SEP in 1922, but it was not until the mid-1930s, when school gardens across Morelos had become lucrative activities, that an official project to expand the number of *Jardines de Niños* materialized. In 1935, SEP officials planned to use two-thirds of the earnings from

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<sup>426</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 41, exp. 39, f. 54, Report by Clemente J. Nápoles, 12 November 1932.

<sup>427</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, f. 13, Report by Efrén Ramírez, 13 March 1933.

<sup>428</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5545, exp. 3943/2, ff. 19-20, Report by Jesús Carranza, 15 November 1940.

each school's plot to fund the Jardines de Niños. They proposed planting a hectare of sugar cane on the school plots to earn more money than even rice could bring in.<sup>429</sup> That same year, locals built sites for daycares in Oaxtepec, Cuautla, and Tepetzingo. Then, after these initial successes, in 1936 the director of education in Morelos gained approval from officials in Mexico City to found fifty-two new Jardines de Niños in the countryside. Over the summer, the director planned to provide two courses for teachers in order to instruct them in management of the Jardines.<sup>430</sup> To what degree these dozens of new daycare services were successful is difficult to gauge given the shortage of documentation, but the expansion of the program in the mid-1930s showed that the schools plots produced an important source of income for rural communities. Furthermore, the Jardines de Niños promised to free village women from the extra preoccupation of watching over their children while toiling in the fields.

There were, of course, official complaints that teachers lacked adequate training for their many duties; that some local inhabitants were apathetic about education; that a few children never advanced academically; and that schools still needed better facilities, but rare is the village that consistently sought to resist the arrival of the SEP for an extended period of time.<sup>431</sup> Indeed, in the hundreds of files documenting the establishment of rural schools, in only one village does the evidence suggest that a local cacique controlled the village classroom and blocked the federal initiative for several years. It is worth examining this unusual instance of indifference to the SEP in Cuentepec (Temixco) to stress its singularity when compared to the rest of rural Morelos. Cuentepec, a pueblo of 625 inhabitants in 1930 (mostly Náhuatl-speaking Indians), was

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<sup>429</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 17, f. 22, Report by Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, 1935.

<sup>430</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 13, f. 18-19, Report by Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, March 1936.

<sup>431</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, ff. 9-11, Report by Efrén Ramírez, 7 March 1933.



isolated by deep ravines in the mountains north of Cuernavaca. When the SEP inspector, José Pedro Durany, first arrived at the village in 1926, a guide led him on a four hour hike across various rivers. Upon arrival in the village, the inspector learned that the two federal teachers, Luis Sámano and Carlota Vázquez, both lived with the local municipal authority, José Urbano Berruecos. Few students attended classes and only one of them spoke Spanish. The municipal authority's assistant, Marcelino Olivares, happened to be the only one in the village who apparently knew how to read and write. With no federal teachers in the state from 1910 to 1926, Oliveras had taught many of the residents reading and writing skills, and by doing so he was able to gain control over the federal school.<sup>432</sup> The SEP inspector, who noted the unsociable characteristic of the pueblo, could do little to wrestle control of the school from Oliveras. Cuentepec's residents could not be gathered to meet and discuss educational matters, and many looked upon the SEP employees with suspicion. The inspector left the village believing he was lucky to not have been attacked by locals, as there were reports that travelers would disappear upon leaving Cuentepec. The pueblo's physical isolation, the cacique's dominance, and linguistic barriers are among the reasons why the SEP failed to launch a successful campaign in Cuentepec.<sup>433</sup> Eight years later, in 1934, low attendance and little popular support still characterized the pueblo's school. That year, a newly arrived SEP teacher complained that few of the residents spoke Spanish and the school did not have access to a bus service that could take children to nearby museums in Cuernavaca.<sup>434</sup> Yet Cuentepec, of course, is notable for its prolonged indifference to the SEP initiative. By

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<sup>432</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, ff. 10-12, Report by José Pedro Durany, 23 February 1926.

<sup>433</sup> Cuentepec indeed fits well the classic model of village resistance to federal education proposed in Moisés Sáenz, *México Íntegro* (Lima: Imprenta Torres Aguirre, 1939).

<sup>434</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 3, exp. 13, f. 26, Illegible to Jefe del Dep. de Esc. Rurs., 5 November 1934.

contrast, the vast majority of pueblos—whether cohesive or divided, highland or lowland, large or small—displayed little such hostility to SEP teachers and visiting inspectors before 1934.

### ***Women and Village School Boards***

Women represented the most numerous and active members of the pueblos in the day-to-day functioning of schools, as federal education offered them new spaces to participate in public matters. As they did with the parish church, women converted the school into social capital and gained influence in the community through these institutions. More than any other group in the villages, women gave the SEP project the “bottom-up” support that federal schools needed in order to succeed. Their commitment to pueblo schooling and later withdrawal on religious-political grounds would also make women key actors in contesting socialist education. It is also worth noting that female teachers outnumbered their male counterparts in Morelos.<sup>435</sup> Because the SEP emphasized women’s participation in the schools, mothers of school children encountered new institutions to engage the national government. One official document stated that the post-revolutionary woman “is intimately linked with the social and civic life of the community,” noting their social influence “inside and outside of the home,” and the need for “the formation of clubs for the protection of the woman.”<sup>436</sup> Specifically, women began to exercise a greater public voice as members of village education assemblies. In 1926, the SEP mandated the creation of education boards in every federal school to serve as interlocutors between rural communities and the state. They also joined the SEP’s campaign to combat alcoholism and promote hygienic habits, sports, public sanitation,

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<sup>435</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 5, Statistics compiled by Rafael Vicente, 20 February 1926.

<sup>436</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, f. 1, “Plan General de Organización del Centro Nocturno ‘Vicente Guerrero’,” January 1929.

and vaccinations. Women, therefore, were integrated into the state-building process as components of the SEP's agenda in rural Mexico.<sup>437</sup>

The ubiquitous involvement of Morelos women in rural education also sheds new light on their role in post-revolutionary *zapatismo*. Mentions of women's participation in the *zapatista* revolution often note their roles as *soldaderas* (female combatants and camp followers), couriers, spies, propagandists, and *curanderas* (traditional healers).<sup>438</sup> The 1930s documentation on schooling, however, reveals that *campesinas* were also central to the defense of the pueblo's religious integrity, which did not come under attack until 1934, when anticlerical reforms to the primary school curriculum attacked village religious practices. *Zapatismo's* religious component is usually stereotyped as *guadalupanismo*, but here we will explore in more detail how local women took the lead in keeping their children out of federal classrooms and confronted teachers over the content being taught to students. Their actions, we shall see, show that post-revolutionary *zapatismo* did not possess an anticlerical component. Quite the contrary, the villagers of Morelos would defend their Catholic beliefs when the state attempted to ride roughshod over pueblo religious culture. It was during this process of resistance to SEP-sponsored anticlericalism that *morelense* women took center stage to negotiate a

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<sup>437</sup> Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). For a broad history on women in the Mexican Revolution, see Shirlene Ann Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her Participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality, 1910-1940*, (Denver: Arden Press, 1990). See also Stephanie J. Smith, *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and The Realities of Patriarchy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary K. Vaughan, eds., *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990: Creating Spaces, Shaping Transitions* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994); Jocelyn Olcott, Mary K. Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, eds., *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>438</sup> For a chapter covering one of *zapatismo's* most famous *soldaderas*, see Olga Cárdenas Trueba, "Amelia Robles y la revolución zapatista en el estado de Guerrero," in *Estudios sobre el zapatismo*, ed. Laura Espejel López (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2000).

place for pueblo religion alongside federal schools, doing so primarily by participating in local education committees (*comités de educación*).

Village education committees, like the ejidal assemblies, bypassed municipal power and fostered political centralization, as the municipal government had no representation on the local school board. With the arrival of federal schools, the town councils also lost the power to appoint and remove local teachers. Village actors, however, continued to exercise significant influence on pedagogy through pueblo education assemblies. The director of the school served as the secretary of the education committee, while the pueblo's inhabitants elected the assembly's president, treasurer, and board members. Board members were in charge of maintaining and improving the school edifice; providing supplies and equipment for the classrooms; planting the school garden; and ensuring children attended classes.<sup>439</sup> While men constituted the majority of participants in these associations, women occasionally gained key spots on the boards as secretaries and *vocales* (committee members). The education committees in Tepoztlán, Totolapan, and Puente de Ixtla, for example, had women serving on the boards as “secretaries” in the first two cases and a *vocal* in the third.<sup>440</sup> These specific cases could perhaps be among the first instances of women's elected participation in federal institutions. In any event, the education assemblies often went beyond their required duties to ensure schools possessed what they needed. Members of the education assemblies, for example, made trips to Cuernavaca to lobby the governor of Morelos to support rural classrooms,<sup>441</sup> and they could be entrusted to run schools during a teacher's

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<sup>439</sup> Rockwell, *Hacer escuela*, 230.

<sup>440</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 24, ff. 1-8, “Relación de los Comités de Educación y Sociedades de Padres de Familia” by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 16 July 1929.

<sup>441</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 35, f. 8, Juan A. Pina to Director de Educación Federal, 11 April 1933.

absence from a pueblo.<sup>442</sup> By the early 1940s, village school assemblies served more than just local interests: they had developed into the bedrocks of a centralized bureaucracy that connected national politicians and bureaucrats to rural Mexicans. In 1942, a federal employee concluded that “almost all [village] Education Committees [of Morelos] are a strong source” of support for not only local schools, but also the government’s national and international policies.<sup>443</sup> While this observation exaggerates the degree to which village education committees supported the entire federal agenda, it does indicate that local school boards were key sites of dialogue between rural Mexicans and national politicians.

Operating in tandem with the education committees were SEP-sponsored mothers’ associations (*sociedades de madres*), which formed in villages across Morelos. While some schools had only one general parents’ association (*sociedades de padres*) in which men dominated the board membership, over time separate mothers’ associations formed in most communities, demonstrating that women had a right to be heard in the community and a forum to express their opinions regarding pedagogical matters. Only mothers of children enrolled in the school were allowed to join these organizations. The mothers’ societies elected their own board members, with each possessing a *presidenta*, secretary, treasurer, and three *vocales*. The support these maternal societies lent to teachers was crucial to establish functioning schools. A federal inspector typically noted that the “Mothers Societies and Education Committees deserve a special mention for their enthusiasm for helping teachers.”<sup>444</sup> The organizations met regularly to enquire what

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<sup>442</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 35, f. 42, Juan A. Pina to Director de Educación Federal, 9 October 1933.

<sup>443</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5590, exp. 4475-61, f. 1, Elpidio López to Secretario de Educación Pública, 19 March 1942.

<sup>444</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 35, f. 8, Juan A. Pina to Director de Educación Federal, 11 April 1933.

classrooms needed. Another SEP report recorded that the mothers societies' "are the spokespersons of the school" and "their influence is felt in the community."<sup>445</sup> Similarly, in Tilzapotla (Puente de Ixtla), a group "made up mostly of mothers of families, is beyond praiseworthy, as the enthusiasm of the teachers and the perseverance of the *señoras* promises excellent results."<sup>446</sup> Mothers, in short, were among the SEP's most devoted allies in the pueblos, and to which the SEP wished to confine them to their stereotypical role as child-bearers for once translated into a measure of political power. The mothers' associations undertook numerous activities to improve schools, such as raising funds to purchase desks to fill classrooms and lanterns to illuminate night courses. Others, such as the mothers' union of Temoac (Zacualpan), wrote to officials in Cuernavaca to request books for the local library.<sup>447</sup> Also reflective of women's genuine commitment to education was the fact that more women than men attended night classes for adults.<sup>448</sup> Clearly, *campesinas* had as much of a stake in rural schools as did men.

Through the mothers' associations, women could veto the school's personnel by lobbying federal officials to remove specific teachers. Such was the case in Tenextepango (Ayala), where a federal inspector observed low attendance in the village classroom. After consulting local parents, he learned that the community considered the federal teacher in Tenextepango lazy and unwilling to work with the students' families; "they cited concrete cases in which the teacher had punished the children with violence and respectfully requested a change of teachers."<sup>449</sup> The federal inspector agreed to do

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<sup>445</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 35, f. 11, Juan A. Pina to Jefe del Departamento de Enseñanza Rural, 1 May 1933.

<sup>446</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, Report by José Pedro Durany, 29 March 1929.

<sup>447</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 21, f. 8, La Presidenta de la Sociedad to Celso Flores Zamora, 3 April 1933.

<sup>448</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 38, ff. 3-4, Report by R. García R., 30 October 1933.

<sup>449</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, f. 14, Report by Efrén Ramírez, 13 March 1933.

so, believing that the assignment of a new teacher to the pueblo would resolve the problem, which it did. In Huazulco (Zacualpan), the problem of low attendance was not that of an abusive teacher alienating parents but rather a feeble instructor who could not maintain control over the children. Mothers and fathers in Huazulco told a visiting SEP inspector that the *maestra* was too old to enforce discipline in the students, who never advanced in their learning. Given this situation, and the fact that the teacher herself wanted to be transferred out of Huazulco, the following week the SEP inspector replaced the *maestra* with a younger and more energetic male instructor, increasing rapidly attendance in the federal school.<sup>450</sup> These cases demonstrate that education committees and parent associations provided rural women with formal channels to negotiate the character of federal schools, and also that the SEP was responsive to such overtures if it meant better attendance in classrooms. In significant ways, then, the rural schools empowered women to have a say in exactly which outsiders would be allowed to work and live in the community.

The influence of the mothers associations was felt particularly in the campaigns to combat alcoholism, which gave local merchants involved in the sale and distribution of booze a good reason to hate the schools.<sup>451</sup> Given the domestic problems and economic costs associated with alcohol and abusive husbands, however, women were attracted to such causes. The SEP's anti-alcohol campaign kicked-off in Mexico in 1929 during the celebrations of the November 1910 revolution. Mothers' associations across Morelos helped to publicize the initiative, and on the *día de la revolución*, educators, parents, and students held events all over the region to speak out against alcoholism. The ceremonies

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<sup>450</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, f. 26, Report by Efrén Ramírez, 15 April 1933.

<sup>451</sup> Ben Fallaw, "Dry Law, Wet Politics: Drinking and Prohibition in Post-Revolutionary Yucatan, 1915-1935," *Latin American Research Review* 37, no. 2 (2002): 37-64.

in Cuernavaca, Cuautla, Puente de Ixtla, and Tepoztlán “were truly solemn,” noted the director of education in Morelos.<sup>452</sup> In Cuautla, the inspector gave a detailed account of the day’s festivities. During the morning, students, teachers, parents, and others from the public marched through the town’s principal streets to the accompaniment of a music band. The demonstrators carried tricolored flags and banners that denounced alcoholism. In the afternoon, countering the theme of alcoholism with health, the students played soccer and basketball on the sports field with the public attending the games. Large signs along the field’s side carried more anti-alcohol slogans. Afterwards, teachers organized a play in the open-air theatre titled “Juana the Adulterous Drama” and one of the female teachers led an anti-alcohol conference.<sup>453</sup> We can assume the moral of the story was that Juana’s infidelity was caused by her husband’s boozing and neglect. In any case, these events set a pattern for anti-alcohol drives to take place every year thereafter in November, and mothers were always enthusiastic about their children partaking in such events.<sup>454</sup> The festivities grew in popularity to include thousands of participants, and by 1932 the state government subsidized anti-alcohol drives.<sup>455</sup> Even more importantly, these anti-alcohol campaigns appear to have had some success. In 1934 a SEP inspector noted a “decrease in the percentage of individuals that enjoyed alcohol” at social gatherings.<sup>456</sup> The influence of village mothers could also be seen in the SEP-sponsored vaccination campaigns. Personal visits by teachers to the homes of families often

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<sup>452</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 47, exp. 55, ff. 14-19, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 27 February 1930.

<sup>453</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 47, exp. 45, ff. 1-2, Report by Clemente J. Nápoles, 19 December 1929.

<sup>454</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 39, ff. 44-46, Report by Leopoldo Rodríguez Calderón, 31 May 1933.

<sup>455</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 2, f. 2, Report by Ramón García Ruiz, 20 November 1932.

<sup>456</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 37, f. 32, Juan Ponce Rodríguez to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 3 January 1934.



convinced rural women of the need to vaccinate children. These efforts also appear to have paid off, as cases of small pox, which could devastate a pueblo, decreased during the 1930s.<sup>457</sup> In short, women had their own gendered notion of the village as sovereign—free of free of booze-peddling caciques—that sometimes resulted from SEP support.

An additional reason for why school associations turned into hubs of women's organization was that in the mid-1930s SEP cooperatives in Morelos began purchasing mechanized corn grinders (*molinos de nixtamal*), precisely when the Agrarian Department made them widely available by offering credits and donations. Until the mid-1930s, only private individuals in larger villages such as Tepoztlán had operated mills, which did not necessarily reduce the cost of ground corn.<sup>458</sup> By 1935, however, the machines grew in popularity and were brought under community control through the SEP cooperatives. The cooperatives in Anenecuilco and Villa de Ayala, for instance, were among the first to acquire corn grinders powered by newly installed electrical turbines.<sup>459</sup> The machines would eventually make the ancient *metate* (stone grinding tablet) obsolete. For millennia, the women of rural Mexico had spent four to six hours every day bent over the *metate* in order to grind corn for tortillas. But between 1935 and 1940, the number of *molinos de nixtamal* in Mexico increased from 927 to 6,000, exemplifying the integration of women into the state's modernization project. These industrial goods, if anything, allowed mothers, wives, and daughters more free time they could dedicate to social affairs such as local pedagogy and commercial activities.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 40, ff. 5-8, Report by Ramón Reynoso, 3 April 1933.

<sup>458</sup> Redfield, *Tepoztlan*, 86-87.

<sup>459</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 17, f. 21, Report by Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, 1935.

<sup>460</sup> Olcott, *Revolutionary Women*, 148.

In most cases, members of the local SEP cooperative operated the mill, but there were a few instances when federal teachers attempted to exercise control over the *molinos*, which could anger locals, who believed educators should stick to teaching students how to “read, write, and count.”<sup>461</sup> The corn mills, *campesinos* asserted, belonged to members of the cooperatives. At least in the late 1930s, control over the mechanized grinders does not appear to have divided communities in Morelos to the degree that it could in the northeast, suggesting that it would be the SEP’s religious policies that sowed discord in the *morelense* countryside, not material items promoted by the schools.<sup>462</sup> Rather, opposition to women’s use of the mills came from husbands and fathers, who considered tortillas made from machine-ground corn inferior. The men were also convinced that extra leisure time would promote female infidelity. Women, over the objections of their husbands, patronized the corn mills anyway, leading one man to inform Oscar Lewis in the 1940s that the success of the corn mills represented “the revolution of the women against the authority of men.”<sup>463</sup> While crude, the quote nonetheless reflects the degree to which the corn mills were changing gender relations in the pueblos. Lewis also noted that technological advances such as bus services, roads, sewing machines, and commercial corn mills had a greater affect on women’s lives than those of men. For these reasons, it was the women of Tepoztlán who promoted the establishment of four commercial mills in the village by 1942, and every *campesina* in the pueblo would soon patronize the mills regularly. As a testament to the importance of women’s public and private labors, Lewis, who was not the most optimistic observer of pueblo life, also observed that “without exception, every man who has been able to

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<sup>461</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 13, f. 6, Report by Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, March 1936; ASHEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 13, f. 65, Report by Eliseo Bandala, 1937.

<sup>462</sup> Olcott, *Revolutionary Women*, 144-153.

<sup>463</sup> Quoted in Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, 323.

improve his economic situation since the Revolution has done so with the help of his wife, and in all the more prosperous homes the wives are known to be unusually capable and industrious.”<sup>464</sup> Village women, of course, still remained largely in the shadows of public affairs, but reconstruction and SEP schools redefined their work practices, and mothers, daughters, and wives took advantage of it. The federal educational project, that is to say, made women more visible in the community, which in turn enhanced village clout in pedagogical matters and made Morelos pueblos more sovereign.

The presence of a federal school was indeed changing relationships between men and women, just as parents encountered new issues that involved gender relations and primary education. Specifically, the SEP’s policy of holding coeducational classrooms often alarmed parents with enrolled daughters, and it would take years of daily negotiations between teachers and parents before the Morelos school system was fully integrated. In Xochitepec, for example, two female teachers, Luz Montes and one known as Señora Millán, taught two grades of segregated classes, when each educator should have only instructed one grade of mixed classes. Reporting on Xochitepec, a SEP inspector explained that this was the case because “the parents of families refuse to send their daughters if the school is mixed.”<sup>465</sup> Meanwhile, in Coatlán del Río, parents wrote to the SEP requesting the suspension of integrated classrooms; but when the inspector arrived in the village shortly after the pueblo’s request, he met with the president of the local parents’ committee, Amado Batalla, and convinced him of the merits of a coeducational system. At a nationwide education conference in Cuautla in 1929, the governor of Morelos and teachers from all over the state and region held a lively debate on the issue of a coeducational primary school system. With only six opposing votes, the

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<sup>464</sup> Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, 323, 99, 108.

<sup>465</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, f. 32, Report by José Pedro Durany, 20 March 1926.

organization passed a resolution to integrate both sexes in Morelos's elementary schools.<sup>466</sup> Yet a year later, the SEP chief in Morelos could only boast that "our schools have little by little been entering the coeducational system, as it has been necessary to destroy not just a few prejudices."<sup>467</sup> Thus, the actual implementation of both sexes sitting together in class required constant dialogue with village parents, but year by year, at least until 1934, enrollment and attendance improved in the classrooms.

Parents' decision to send their children to attend classes regularly demonstrated one of the strongest ways a family voiced support for a local school. Yet teachers faced an uphill battle against the demands of the agricultural cycle given the fact that nearly all of Morelos's rural families were occupied in the fields each year during the plantings season from May to July. During these months, parents required both boys and girls to work ejidal lands.<sup>468</sup> "It didn't matter whether the child was a boy or girl," Esperanza Martínez remembered before the birth of her daughter in the early 1920s, "all children mean money, because when they begin to work, they earn."<sup>469</sup> The issue of classroom attendance, that is, brought into focus the paradox of rural poverty: parents knew well that education led to greater economic opportunities, but children also needed to learn cultivation techniques and lend a hand with the plantings. The state government responded to this problem in 1931 by reforming the school calendar. From then on, school vacations in Morelos would no longer be held in November and December, but instead in June and July, when children were toiling in the fields.<sup>470</sup> It remains unclear to what degree the official decree improved daily attendance. Overall enrollments of

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<sup>466</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 26, ff. 91-94, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 15 October 1929.

<sup>467</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 47, exp. 55, f. 16, Report by Felipe de J. Espinosa, 27 February 1930.

<sup>468</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 3, exp. 7, f. 10, Report by Clemente J. Nápoles, 31 May 1927.

<sup>469</sup> Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, 116.

<sup>470</sup> De Jesús Orea, "El caso de la escuela de Calderón," 289.

school-aged children in the villages stood strong at just under ninety percent according to official school censuses, but only sixty-nine percent of those children showed up for exams in 1933.<sup>471</sup> There was always a significant discrepancy, in others words, in the number of enrolled students compared to the number that actually attended classes. Nonetheless, the reform of the school calendar demonstrates that authorities were willing to modify the federal school program in order to meet the circumstances of *morelense* families; hence, we see that the SEP sympathized with at least some local objectives. By early 1934, SEP inspectors boasted of the progress primary schools were making each year. One official concluded that “teachers and communities have entered an era of full-blown activity...as the most difficult step of persuasion and convincing [villagers to participate in the schools] has come a long way.”<sup>472</sup> Educators could now devote more attention to actual pedagogy.

Federal schools were also sites where villagers came into contact with female educators. Teaching was in fact the only profession that women practiced in rural Morelos, and they made up over half of the labor force. Most, presumably, underwent training at one of the normal schools operating in Mexico City. Of thirteen such schools, nine were exclusively for women.<sup>473</sup> Under Calles, however, normal schools were regionalized; in 1928, the SEP established the Escuela Normal Rural de Oaxtepec, Morelos, to instruct the state’s future teachers. By 1933, despite a constant lack of resources, eighty percent of the state’s primary instructors had been trained at the Oaxtepec Normal School, although it is not clear if they all hailed originally from Morelos. Yet the teachers instructed at Oaxtepec, according to SEP inspectors, lacked

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<sup>471</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, Report by Efrén Ramírez, not dated.

<sup>472</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja, 48, exp. 37, f. 33, Juan Ponce y Rodríguez to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 3 January 1934.

<sup>473</sup> Vaughan, *The State, Social Class, and Education*, 202.

sufficient training for their many duties in the pueblos, which posed “one of the greatest obstacles” to achieving the SEP’s goals in Morelos.<sup>474</sup> In 1934, for example, sixty-four federal teachers working in the state had yet to take their certification exam at the normal school. The SEP tried to remedy teachers’ lack of training by offering special courses for instructors on socialist doctrine, rural health and housing, physical education, and agricultural techniques.<sup>475</sup> If anything, then, teachers’ inadequate schooling gave villagers more opportunity to mold the federal project to meet local needs. In any event, it would be these teachers who dialogued with village parents regarding the content of classroom pedagogy.

Federal instructors, in general, did not interfere in local political struggles before 1934. Rather, there is some evidence that teachers took steps during the heated electoral battles of the 1920s to ease tensions within and between communities. Such was the case in February and March 1926, when three factions declared victory in the first and only gubernatorial election of the decade. During a visit to Tlaltenango (Cuernavaca), the SEP inspector found the federal *maestra* alarmed by the village’s violent political conflict with neighboring Santa María, Chamilpa, and Tetela, which had resulted in injuries and death.<sup>476</sup> Shortly afterwards, in order to seek a rapprochement between the politically divided region, the inspector led a field trip for the students of the Chamilpa school to visit Tetela. After a walk whereby the inspector gave “simple talks of geography and knowledge of nature, provoking questions” from interested pupils, the students arrived in Tetela where a group of school children awaited and greeted them with “applause and a

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<sup>474</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 48, exp. 38, f. 31, Efrén Ramírez to Secretario de Educación Pública, 15 April 1933.

<sup>475</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 4, f. 22, Document by Celso Flores Zamora, 21 December 1934 and ff. 29-30, Document unsigned, not dated.

<sup>476</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, ff. 19-23, Report by José Pedro Durany, 8 March 1926.

choir song.”<sup>477</sup> Promoting reconciliation between rival villages, such as occurred in this case, reveals one way how the SEP was able to stay above the fray of inter-pueblos rivalries. Consequently, SEP employees in Morelos were not polarizing figures to the degree that they were in other states. Rather, through local education committees and mothers associations, villagers exercised control of village pedagogy, while teachers generally worked in tandem with the community to pursue mutual goals. It was in 1934, however, with the introduction of an anticlerical curriculum into rural classrooms, when villagers lost say in what students learned. Consequently, SEP schools were delegitimized in the eyes of rural folks and attendance in federal classrooms dropped precipitously.

### ***Pueblo Religion & Socialist Education***

The year 1934 saw a national campaign to reform the constitution and teach “socialist education” in federal primary schools. Until then, federal teachers possessed modest resources and focused on imparting basic knowledge such as mathematics and grammar; they sought to integrate rural communities into the national market economy and instill new behaviors and skills. Yet come 1934, instructors were expressing a new missionary zeal and stepping deeper into village politics and agrarian matters. Educators wanted to nationalize the ethnically diverse countryside and forge one popular Mexican culture (albeit one defined by urban intellectuals), and they considered the Catholic Church their primary nemesis. The Church posed an obstacle to a secular state attempting to instill civic patriotism and nationalistic values, especially in the rural population. On the one hand, official rhetoric repeatedly referred to the need to “defanaticize” “superstitious” Mexicans, whose ultimate loyalty, authorities assumed, resided in Rome with the Pope,

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<sup>477</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, ff. 4-7, Report by José Pedro Durany, 15 February 1926; AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 16, ff. 19-23, Report by José Pedro Durany, 8 March 1926.

and not with the Mexican nation. Yet educators now also viewed the Church not just as anti-national but also as a class enemy of the proletariat, making the curriculum reforms more radical. Socialist education, in other words, would liberate the peasantry of clerical tutelage and false consciousness.<sup>478</sup> Back in Morelos, in August 1934 the state and national governments signed an agreement to federalize the remaining thirty-two schools under Cuernavaca's jurisdiction, many of which were in the southeast, resulting in stronger central control of pedagogy in distant rural areas.<sup>479</sup> Meanwhile, the unionization of teachers in Morelos accompanied the process of federalization. To accompany the pedagogical reforms, in August 1934 the state legislature in Cuernavaca passed harsh anticlerical legislation, limiting the number of priests to one per 75,000 inhabitants and requiring clergymen to register with the state government.<sup>480</sup> These events unfolded within a short window of time and tipped the balance of power in the Morelos countryside heavily in favor of centralized government, especially regarding local religious practices.

Opposition to the curriculum reforms came from the villages—primarily among parents of school children. While an isolated and small-scale armed rebellion led by former *zapatista* militant Enrique Rodríguez “*El Tallarín*” would menace authorities from 1948 to 1938, it was his supporters in the villages that enabled his revolt to endure, throwing into question the alliance between Mexico City and *zapatismo*. Underground Catholic cells and organs of the conservative press such as *La Opinión* and *Hombre Libre* heightened anxieties among parents by exaggerating abuses committed by the federal

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<sup>478</sup> For socialist education, see Victoria Lerner, *Historia de la revolución Mexicana, 1934-1940*, vol. 17: *La educación socialista* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1979); Vaughan, *Cultural Politics*; Becker, *Setting the Virgin*; Lewis, *Ambivalent Revolution*.

<sup>479</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 3, ff. 4-8. ‘Convenio para Unificar y Fomentar la Educación Primaria en el Estado de Morelos’, 14 August 1934.

<sup>480</sup> *El Nacional*, 25 August 1934.



government, and the Church warned mothers and fathers not to send their children to schools that adopted socialist education. Quarrels over religion and the school began to surface in SEP reports in the spring of 1934 as the national debate over socialist education spread.<sup>481</sup> Then, in the fall, conflicts boiled over, because the government's attack on pueblo religion violated its pact with rural Morelos. In the face of such opposition, the state was especially feckless and provoked a battle that was unexpected, even though it did not confront a powerful Church in Morelos

Historically, the Church could not flex its institutional muscle in Morelos to the degree that it did in states such as Jalisco or Michoacán. During the eighteenth century, the districts of Cuernavaca and Cuautla—then part of the Archdiocese of Mexico—had been hotbeds of village anticlericalism and regions of poor church attendance.<sup>482</sup> Although Bourbon anticlericalism in the eighteenth century was different from revolutionary anticlericalism in the twentieth century, the pueblos had a historic tendency to resist secularization and attacks on Catholic practices. Not until the creation of the Diocese of Cuernavaca in 1891—making it one of the newest in Mexico—did the Catholic Church strengthen its hand in the pueblos, although we should remember that it was most likely formed to weaken the Archdiocese of Mexico rather than as a laboratory of socially militant Catholicism. The diocese covered the entire state of Morelos, contained twenty-six parishes, and was led by Bishop Hipólito Vera until 1898. Both Vera and his successor, Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete (1899-1912) were pious theological conservatives—experts on, and defenders of, the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Plancarte y Navarrete focused his energies on training the local clergy, made pastoral

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<sup>481</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 13, ff. 9-20, Juan Ponce to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 6 May 1934.

<sup>482</sup> For a summary of religious life in Morelos in the late-eighteenth century, see appendix C of William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

visits to the parishes, and did not shake up the Church in Morelos.<sup>483</sup> In his words, the Mexican clergy and laity made up “a school that we can call conservative, whose principal tendency was to preserve the usages, customs, and let us also say it, the abuses, of the old regalistic Spanish church, in the ceremonies of worship, in religious practices, and in the education of children, in schools, colleges, and seminaries.”<sup>484</sup> Plancarte y Navarrete, that is to say, bemoaned the lack of sacramental piety and was only partially successful in changing it. Yet *hacendados*, local merchants, and *caciques* backed the Porfirian Church in Morelos and made it into a stronger force in the locales by using coercion to promote pompous village fiestas. In Tepoztlán, the cacique collected unlawful religious taxes and threatened residents with punishment if they did not perform certain tasks for the festivals. One Tepoztecan later recalled that “people participated in religious fiestas much more than today because they believed attendance was compulsory.”<sup>485</sup> In general, then, religion in rural Morelos was more festive than sacramental, or, as Redfield put it, “Mexican folk enjoy a great number of festivals which are in part worship but in greater part play.”<sup>486</sup> Thus the clergy did not control religious life in Morelos to the degree that it did in the other regions such as the Bajío region. Rather, local devotions, such as the famous Cristo of Totolapan, have strongly characterized religious practices in Morelos.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> For Bishops Vera and Plancarte, see Emeterio Valverde Téllez, *Bio-bibliografía eclesiástica mexicana (1821-1943)*, vol. 2, (Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1949), 374-378, 234-240.

<sup>484</sup> Quoted in Stafford Poole, *The Guadalupan Controversies in Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 30.

<sup>485</sup> Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, 259.

<sup>486</sup> Redfield, *Teopoztlan*, 91.

<sup>487</sup> Scheper Hughes, *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix*. See also Ma. Cristina Saldaña Fernández, *Los días de los años: Ciclo ritual en el suroeste de Morelos* (Cuernavaca: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, 2011); Adriana Estrada Cajigal, *Fiestas cívicas, religiosas y populares en Morelos* (Cuernavaca: Gobierno del Estado de Morelos, 1994); Sánchez Reséndiz, *De rebeldes fe*.

Added to this, the Mexican Revolution shattered any gains made by the institutional Church in Morelos during the Porfiriato. In 1912, Manuel Fulcheri y Pietrasanta (1912-1922) assumed the episcopacy of Cuernavaca, but he did not take up residence in the town until 1919 due to the revolutionary upheaval. Meanwhile, the Church languished, though it never suffered attacks by *zapatistas* during the fighting and acted with independence towards the revolutionaries. Some *zapatista* ideologues, in fact, justified the redistribution of land according to the Catholic principle of natural law.<sup>488</sup> Of course, plenty of priests denounced the *zapatistas*, but many also communicated with insurgent leaders and sought to maintain the prestige of the Church in the countryside. One famous case included the heroic story of a martyred priest in Tepalcingo. The cleric rang the parish bells to warn of approaching federal soldiers, who later killed him.<sup>489</sup> Bishop Fulcheri could devote little time to the spiritual reconstruction of Morelos because in 1922 Bishop Francisco Uranga y Sáenz (1922-1930) was appointed to the Diocese of Cuernavaca. Uranga activated catechetical teachings in all of Morelos's parishes, but, again, the Cristero War forced the bishop and the region's priests to flee to Mexico City in 1927 and most did not return to Morelos until 1929.<sup>490</sup> Recurrent crises, in other words, prevented the Church from exerting more influence in the countryside. Still, the periodic absences of the clergy did not necessarily disrupt the religious customs of Morelos as local people enjoyed them. If anything, it exacerbated a ritual autonomy in the pueblos not constrained by official doctrines, allowing local cults to thrive in the

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<sup>488</sup> See Miguel Mendoza López Schwerdtfeger, *Tierra Libre!* (Mexico City: Impr. y Fototipia de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1915).

<sup>489</sup> De Giuseppe, 'Piedad para el indio,' 171-196.

<sup>490</sup> For Bishops Fulcheri and Francisco María González y Arias (1931-46), see Valverde Téllez, *Bio-bibliografía*, vol. 1, 310-315, 359-361. For Bishop Uranga, see Valverde Téllez, *Bio-bibliografía*, vol. 2, 349-351.

1920s. In short, holy life fell into the hands of village institutions and coexisted somewhat uneasily with official theology.<sup>491</sup>

Socialist education threatened the religious effervescence of the pueblos. The reforming of the Constitution amounted not merely to an official assault on the institutional Church but on popular religious beliefs because it sought to secularize village life. This offensive against the cyclical customs and rituals in rural communities had not occurred in Morelos during the Cristero War of 1926-1929. Then, teachers abstained from religious discussion in classrooms, and many priests left temporarily to reside in Mexico City while the body count rose in the centre-west states. In 1929, for example, only four priests officially registered with the state government, although others likely operated clandestinely in Morelos.<sup>492</sup> No cleric resided in Tepoztlán while North American anthropologist Robert Redfield carried out research in the large village between 1926 and 1927, yet the local cult flourished.<sup>493</sup> Nor is there any evidence that the religious festivals of rural Morelos were disrupted or generated discord during the Cristero War. At the height of the conflict, a Gobernación agent even noted that “there is not a State in the country as peaceful as Morelos.”<sup>494</sup> Clergymen returned to the state at the end of the conflict and resumed their roles of administering the sacraments and acting as moral authorities in the pueblos. All seemed quiet until teachers introduced socialist education into the classrooms. After the state legislature limited the number of priests in Morelos in August 1934 to one per 75,000 inhabitants, that fall, teachers organized into the Bloque Radical de Maestros Socialistas de Morelos and declared support for the

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<sup>491</sup> Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits*, 123-124.

<sup>492</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 300, exps. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, Gobernación to the individual priests verifying their addresses, 28 February, 11, 12 March, 2 April, 3 June 1929.

<sup>493</sup> Redfield, *Tepoztlan*, 149.

<sup>494</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 271, exp. 17, Unsigned report to Francisco A. Mayer, 18 February 1927.

PNR's Six Year Plan. The union declared the Catholic clergy as the prime obstacle to implementing socialist education.<sup>495</sup> The SEP offered new courses for teachers in socialist doctrine and organization and discussions on "the influence of religion on social structure."<sup>496</sup> The state, therefore, now set out to eradicate religious beliefs all together, not just clerical influence. In sum, whereas anticlericalism in 1920s Morelos constituted high range ecclesiastical persecution and prompted informal evasion of the law, the antireligious policies of the 1930s used federal schools to broadcast secular values into the heart of rural communities and attacked religion's role in everyday life, flying in the face of tradition.

The upheaval in Morelos also sheds new light on the understudied Second Cristiada of the 1930s, or La Segunda. This matters because historians have underestimated the importance of the Segunda and the extent of violent opposition to President Lázaro Cárdenas that originated in the state. Morelos, in fact, produced one of the largest *segundista* rebellions outside of the Bajío region. This was not due to top-down clerical support, though parish priests were more active in Morelos pueblos in the 1930s than they had been in the late 1920s. In contrast to the previous decade, the Catholic Church of the 1930s condemned violence by any organization that tried to claim the Church's mantle and punished clergy who aided pious insurgents. Instead, the Segunda included a diverse array of revolutionary chiefs, and its strength lay in the diffuse opposition to central impositions throughout rural Mexico.<sup>497</sup> Most importantly, the anticlericalism of the 1930s impacted rural communities in Morelos in a way that anticlericalism had not during the previous decade, which explains *zapatista* hostility to

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<sup>495</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 34, Declaration of Comité Directivo, 2 November 1934.

<sup>496</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 4, f. 22, Document by Celso Flores Zamora, 21 December 1934.

<sup>497</sup> Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation*; Guerra Manzo, "E fuego;" Meyer, "La Segunda."

*cardenismo*. In the 1920s, indeed, former *zapatista* militants, such as Genovevo de la O, had defended the federal government and hounded *cristeros* in the centre-west states; village militias in Morelos also mobilized to fight invading *cristero* cavalry from Guerrero.<sup>498</sup> The *segunderos* of Morelos were also unlike those in Michoacán and elsewhere in that they had not revolted during the major religious conflict of 1926-1929. In other words, the Segunda in Morelos does not represent a classic or monocausal *cristero* rebellion. Rather, in religious terms, the *segunderos* of Morelos tended to defend a local religion based on devotions to village saints instead of the institutional Catholic Church. It was state-sponsored attacks on these local practices, not a defense of universal and doctrinaire Catholicism, which fanned the flames of dissent in Morelos. In political terms, the case of Morelos shares some characteristics with the *segunderos* of the Sierra Madre in Sonora, where inhabitants of the mountains resented the growing presence of the national government.<sup>499</sup> In both Morelos and Sonora, local grievances went beyond religious matters and included calls for democracy, clean elections, and local sovereignty. The Second Cristiada, therefore, encompassed various critiques of an expanding federal government.

The immediacy of protest tells its own story. As soon as the 1934-1935 school year began, descriptions of religious divisions within pueblos filled the reports of federal bureaucrats. On Monday 6 November 1934, in Amacuitlapilco (Jonacatepec), a village of some four-hundred persons, only six students appeared in class. The teachers proceeded to visit the homes of those absent in order to persuade parents to return their children to school. In several homes SEP representatives were greeted with hostile words

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<sup>498</sup> Salmerón Castro, 'Un general agrarista,' 537-579. For militias and volunteers from Morelos that mobilized to defend the federal government during the *cristero* war, see AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 219, exp. 5, ff. 86, 92-3, Gobernación to Secretario de Guerra y Marina, 25 January, 9, 20 February 1928.

<sup>499</sup> Adrian A. Bantjes, *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1998), 46-50.

and threats. Still only ten children presented themselves in class on Tuesday. That afternoon at around six o'clock, the federal zone inspector attempted to gather villagers together and convince them of the educational project's merits. After nearly giving up on the meeting, the municipal officer backed by twelve men armed with machetes confronted the inspector, Juan Ponce, and two teachers. The municipal representative's hostile approach alarmed Ponce, since he had held cordial meetings in the pueblo on previous occasions with the same individual. The inspector calmly sought to explain the SEP's intentions and purposes, but the party exclaimed to the cry of "*Viva la Religión*" "that they did not want the school because it combated priests and religion," Ponce recalled. Within moments, a person struck bells, alarming the villagers. Men and women armed with machetes, pistols, and rifles surrounded the SEP personnel. Several persons in the mob began to shout denunciations of the federal and state governments. The angry crowd attempted to grab the teachers and threatened to kill them. Shots were fired into the air. Alarmed at the potentially tragic situation unfolding, authorities in the village—the municipal representative and the militia chief—and several individuals attempted to calm the mob and protect the SEP employees. Inspector Ponce and the two teachers managed to escape in a car and flee to Jonacatepec for safety.<sup>500</sup>

Similar events to those in Amacuitlapilco occurred in nearby communities. In Tetelilla, a pueblo of some nine hundred inhabitants, the residents split between supporters of the government and a religious faction. The SEP inspector admitted that "it has not been possible to control the school population, as clerical agitation has provoked a crisis in the attendance of children whose parents are fanatics." In the district seat of Jonacatepec, one of the local clergymen was openly hostile to the school. The same

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<sup>500</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 13, ff. 39-41, Juan Ponce y Rodríguez to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 8 November 1934.

priest made frequent visits to neighboring Chalcacingo, where “residents comply with the pulpit’s propaganda and, under pretexts, withdraw their children from school.” An inspector visiting Huitchila proudly wrote that the teacher controlled the pueblo and had even “saved several residents from being dragged into the armed struggle by deception carried out and achieved by the criminal Enrique Rodríguez.”<sup>501</sup> Several residents had committed themselves to a rebellion with *El Tallarín*, but the maestro convinced them of their imprudence. Rodríguez indeed actively recruited villagers in eastern Morelos on religious grounds.

In other cases, pious individuals regularly placed printed flyers under the doors of villagers’ houses during the nights. The small pamphlets attacked the educational reforms, extolled religious principles, and called upon parents to not send their children to federal classrooms.<sup>502</sup> A group of residents in Yecapixtla complained that socialist education offered them little. The teacher did not instruct children how to pray or how to make the sign of the cross. Parents refused to send their young ones to school “until the Ejecutivo Federal is changed, for it is its ideology that makes teaching in the schools different from its previous form.”<sup>503</sup> They saw President Cárdenas as the culprit behind the new curriculum. Mothers and fathers resisted by sending their children to private schools that three local women had established. The director of the school in Yecapixtla accused several in the group of hiding the local priest, who changed homes frequently. In the eastern highland pueblo of Tetela del Volcán, parents of children fervently protested the introduction of sexual education into classrooms—another example of the aggressive

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<sup>501</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 13, ff. 27-34, Juan Ponce y Rodríguez to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 2 November 1934.

<sup>502</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 13, f. 2, Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso to Depto. de Enseñanza Rural, 19 March 1936.

<sup>503</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 8, f. 9, José M. Pastrana to Inspector de la 6/a. Zona Escolar, 29 August 1935.



purging of local religious beliefs. After endless discussions on the topic, the adults of the village wrote that “there remains no other path for us parents of families than to unite in order to defend our children from the prostitution that threatens them.”<sup>504</sup> Sex education, parents asserted, would lead children down a slippery slope of immorality. Procopio Mendieta, father of a young daughter, also spoke out against the SEP curriculum in the highlands around Tetela del Volcán. He specifically condemned educators for preaching atheism to children and for targeting women with their propaganda during local religious festivals. Authorities accused Mendieta of colluding with *El Tallarín* and eventually jailed the agitator.<sup>505</sup> Local devotees, in other words, not just the clergy, presented a grassroots bulwark against anticlerical impositions from the outside.<sup>506</sup>

The anticlericalism of socialist education offended villagers who feared that their children would not receive a proper religious upbringing. In particular, educators faced difficulty when asked questions on the origins of man and the universe. Following a classroom lecture on geography given by a SEP inspector, “questions and discussions came up about the origins of the Universe and our planet Earth, discussions of great interest,” he recalled. The majority of teachers, the official explained, did not know how to respond to such religious questions. *Campesinos* would nonchalantly ask educators such loaded questions when performing services for the school or when dining with the maestros. The inspector proceeded to elaborate on the theories of the origins of man. He

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<sup>504</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 44, exp. 54, f. 1, Francisco Reyes and others to Secretario de Educación Pública, 2 February 1934.

<sup>505</sup> ACCJM, Penal, exp. 1/936, f. 5, Elías Paláez Vera quoting statements by Procopio Mendieta, 15 January 1936.

<sup>506</sup> Adrian A. Bantjes, “Regional Dynamics of Anticlericalism and Defanaticization in Revolutionary Mexico,” in Matthew Butler (ed.), *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 125.

discredited the religious explanation and extolled a scientific approach to such issues.<sup>507</sup> These arguments, however, did little to convince concerned villagers. Pious women from across the state met in Cuernavaca and Cuautla in 1935 to discuss how best to combat the educational reforms.<sup>508</sup> The content of classroom teachings was not the only source of discontent. A teacher upset the residents of San Pablo Las Huertas (Cuernavaca), when, for lack of a location, a classroom was set up in the village church, which locals considered a profanation of sacred space.<sup>509</sup> Instances such as this demonstrate that SEP employees in the mid-1930s showed little regard or respect for local customs. At best, some teachers simply ignored the new SEP curriculum and stuck to old ways. The religious *maestras* of Quebrantadero (Axochiapan), for example, avoided official rhetoric that would offend the local population, while the teacher in Atotonilco (Tepalcingo) refused to shed her religious beliefs, “obeying the current of her community.”<sup>510</sup> Some teachers, therefore, were unwilling to tow the official line because they themselves found the anticlerical reforms repugnant.

Village conflicts over socialist education could involve the highest authorities in Morelos. In May 1935, the indigenous highland pueblos around the Popocatepetl Volcano revolted against SEP schools, and thereafter armed rebels roamed the region. The situation forced the SEP director in Morelos and Governor Bustamante to travel to the area accompanied by an escort of federal soldiers and calm the unrest themselves. In Hueyapan, residents had taken away the keys of the school from the inspector and forced

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<sup>507</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5787-4679, exp. 11, f. 13, Rafael Robledo to Director de Educación Federal, 18 March 1936.

<sup>508</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 17, ff. 34-35, Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso to Miembros del Comité Central Ejecutivo de la Liga de Comunidades Agrarias, 26 October 1935.

<sup>509</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5787, exp. 4-5-8-30, f. 57, Report by Donaciano Mungía, 12 March 1936.

<sup>510</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 46, exp. 13, ff. 27-34, Juan Ponce y Rodríguez to Director de Educación Federal en el Estado, 2 November 1934.

the teacher to leave the pueblo. The governor managed to calm the situation when he promised to substitute the federal teachers for educators employed by the state government. The indigenous of Hueyapan, the SEP director lamented, “wanted teachers from the State ‘because they do not teach socialist education.’”<sup>511</sup> By the end of the 1934-1935 school year, the head of the SEP in Morelos admitted that “the struggle has been hard” to sway children back to the classrooms after “attendance in schools...decreased notably in the entire state.”<sup>512</sup>

It was only after President Cárdenas began to scale-back official anticlericalism in 1936-1937 that reports of empty classrooms in Morelos subsided and a sense of normalcy returned to rural schools. Popular opposition to socialist education across Mexico, which reached a bloody climax in 1936 after Catholics rioted in San Felipe Torres Mochas, Guanajuato, coupled with the armed rebellion in the Morelos hills and peaceful resistance in the valleys forced the president to avoid further confrontation with Catholics. Soon after, state governments followed the federal lead and began to repeal harsh anticlerical legislation.<sup>513</sup> Although the anticlerical provisions of Article three of the Constitution would not be reformed officially until the early 1940s, antireligious teaching in rural classrooms faded in the late 1930s, helping to recreate the pact between *zapatismo* and the federal government. Thus, parents of school children had won a victory by negotiating a place for pueblo religion to coexist alongside secular schools. The particular case of Morelos reveals that anticlericalism in the form of socialist education during the mid-1930s projected secularism into the heart of rural communities, which

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<sup>511</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 13, f. 2, Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso to Jefe del Depto. de Enseñanza Rural, 19 March 1936.

<sup>512</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 17, f. 8, Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso to Jefe del Depto. de Enseñanza Rural, 27 March 1935.

<sup>513</sup> Lyle C. Brown, “Mexican Church-State Relations, 1933-1940,” *Journal of Church and State* 6 (1964): 213-219.

offended popular religious beliefs. This explains why Morelos, a state where the institutional Church was historically weak, became a battleground in the Segunda Cristiada. Moreover, as the next chapter will show, the rebellion led by *El Tallarín* from the mountains of eastern Morelos played a crucial role in forcing Cárdenas's hand on the religious question.

## Chapter V: El Tallarín and the Revival of Zapatismo, 1934-1938

The previous chapters' focus on the political, agrarian, and religious questions as they pertained to pueblos in post-revolutionary Morelos is important to understand the rebellion led by Enrique Rodríguez, because his struggle correlated strongly with the agrarian debacle of the mid-1930s, *callista* political corruption, and the rise and fall of official anticlericalism in federal schools.<sup>514</sup> In other words, Rodríguez was a proxy of the pueblos and waged war on their behalf during the breakdown of the pact between rural Morelos and the national state. Indeed, the narrative shifts in this chapter from the pueblos' post-revolutionary experience to the individual struggle of Rodríguez, whose 1934 uprising provides a window into how exactly his rebellion forced President Cárdenas to renegotiate the terms of the region's loyalty to the national state.

By the end of the rebellion in 1938, Enrique Rodríguez was well known. *Time* magazine likened the battle-hardened rebel to a western cowboy in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century: The "swashbuckling hold-up man who confined his depredations mainly to big banks and railroads was at least half hero."<sup>515</sup> A year before, the *New York Times* called Rodríguez "one of Mexico's most noted bandits" and reported periodically on his rural attacks.<sup>516</sup> The Mexican press, meanwhile, described Rodríguez as a "famous rebel," who possessed a network of supporters to "outwit the persecution of federal troops."<sup>517</sup> Friend and foe alike referred to the skinny Rodríguez by his nickname, *El Tallarín* ("the noodle"). Yet despite such attention in the national and

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<sup>514</sup> Much of this chapter is taken from Salvador Salinas, "Untangling Mexico's Noodle: El Tallarín and the Revival of Zapatismo in

Morelos, 1934–1938," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 46, no. 3 (2014): 471-499.

<sup>515</sup> *Time*, "Reformed Noodle," 19 September 1938.

<sup>516</sup> *New York Times*, "16 Mexican Bandits Are Slain by Troops," 13 April 1937.

<sup>517</sup> *Excelsior*, "Posible muerte de un famoso rebelde," 8 April 1937; *Excelsior*, "Fue fusilado un llamado Coronel," 29 November 1935.

international press, historians know relatively little about Enrique Rodríguez Mora, or the rebellion he led in Morelos. This is surprising because, long before Rubén Jaramillo took up arms against the Mexican state in the 1940s and 1950s, Rodríguez, also a former combatant under Emiliano Zapata, headed the first prolonged guerilla insurgency in Morelos (1934-1938) since Zapata's death in 1919 and the end of the Mexican Revolution. Yet while scholars have published works in both Spanish and English on Jaramillo, Rodríguez does not even have a page dedicated to him in the collected biographies of former *zapatista* militants, which include over 150 different entries of men and women in three volumes.<sup>518</sup> Both Rodríguez and Jaramillo shared an antipathy towards the corruption of the state government and expressed similar agrarian grievances, but their movements were distinct, especially in terms of the national political contexts of their revolts. Rodríguez operated before and during the leftist presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) and Jaramillo during the more conservative administrations of the mid-twentieth century. The rebels of the 1930s targeted school teachers in their attacks, whereas educators in the countryside often sympathized with Jaramillo. This fact has led many contemporaries and some historians to label Rodríguez as a *cristero* – a religious militant and defender of the Catholic Church. Jaramillo, for his part, adopted and preached Methodism, but religious issues seemingly played no overt role in his movement. Politically, *El Tallarín* did not offer a clearly articulated political alternative as did the *jaramillistas*, who gained more support and longevity in the pueblos by establishing an electoral platform and participating in elections. Rodríguez, however, remained isolated, armed, and mobile in the sierra for four years.

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<sup>518</sup> López González, *Los compañeros*; Arredondo Torres, *Los valientes de Zapata*, vols. 1 and 2. For a recent treatment of the Jaramillo rebellion, see Padilla, *Rural Resistance*. In Spanish, see Hernández Hernández, "Razón y muerte de Rubén Jaramillo," 429-481; García Jiménez, "El movimiento jaramillista," in *Morelos: Cinco siglos*, 301-310. Ravelo Lecuona, *Los jaramillistas*.

Whereas Tanalís Padilla emphasizes the compatibility of the *cardenista* project of national agrarian reform with Jaramillo's quest for justice in the countryside, *El Tallarín* represents a clash between *zapatismo* and the *cardenista* state.<sup>519</sup> *El Tallarín*, rather, resembles the diverse groups in Mexico which combated and opposed Cárdenas, such as small property owners, the middle class, industrialists, and Catholic groups.<sup>520</sup> As previous chapters have shown, before 1934, the peasantry of Morelos had served as a crucial block of support for weak federal regimes. In exchange for land and electoral loyalty, former *zapatista* troops had mobilized to defend the national government during the De la Huerta rebellion of 1923-1924 and the *cristero* war of 1926-1929. As the case of *El Tallarín* shows, this alliance broke down in 1934 for three reasons. First, the federal government stopped redistributing land in Morelos in 1929, although landless peasants from neighboring Guerrero continued to settle in the state. Overpopulation, bureaucratization, and corruption put new pressures on natural resources and villages. Second, by 1934, a stronger regime in Mexico City and Cuernavaca tolerated less independent political organization than in the 1920s. Civilian politicians used an increasingly heavy hand to deal with former *zapatistas* such as *El Tallarín* who would not fully support the official Partido Nacional Revolucionario. Finally, the widespread hostility in Morelos to Cárdenas's educational reforms led to violence and attendance in federal classrooms plummeted. Enrique Rodríguez headed a three-pronged rebellion and in defense of agrarian self-reliance, traditional chieftainship, and religious liberty. His movement evolved into a broad critique of the post-revolutionary state's trajectory in the

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<sup>519</sup> Padilla, *Rural Resistance*, 55-84.

<sup>520</sup> Raquel Sosa Elizaga, *Los códigos ocultos del cardenismo: Un estudio de la violencia política, el cambio social y la continuidad institucional* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 1996); Martha B. Loyo, "Las oposiciones al cardenismo," in ed. Samuel León y González, *El cardenismo, 1932-1940*, (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 2010), 436-494.

mid-1930s. By 1938, the revolt had forced Cárdenas to renegotiate the terms of *zapatista* loyalty to the federal regime in order to secure peace in Morelos.<sup>521</sup>

### *Agrarian Upheaval*

Little is known of Enrique Rodríguez's early life. Born circa 1900 in the small Morelos community of San Pablo Hidalgo (Tlaltizapán), Enrique grew up in a ranching family that possessed private land before the revolution. San Pablo Hidalgo had formed as an agricultural colony in the second half of the nineteenth century, but the expanding sugar estate of the Chinameca hacienda threatened to push the pueblo's families on to sterile

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<sup>521</sup> Historians have speculated and offered various interpretations to explain *El Tallarín's* rebellion. For most, Rodríguez is relegated to a footnote in a larger story of the tumultuous and transforming presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas. Luis González cites news of the "crimes of El Tallarín" as proof of the uncertainty faced by Cárdenas during his first days in office. Luis González, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, 1934-1940*, vol. 15: *Los días del Presidente Cárdenas* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1981), 21. Perhaps most influentially, Jean Meyer has argued that Rodríguez fought for religious freedom against a secularizing state and that he represented a classic *cristero* insurgent. Meyer omits a discussion of Morelos politics from his analysis and cites just one manifesto issued by the insurgent in 1937, found today in the archive of Aurelio Acevedo, a former *cristero* leader. In the manifesto Rodríguez declares that "although it might be a little late, we struggle as much for religion as for all the rights of the fatherland in order to defend the true reason of the pueblos." Quoted in Meyer, *La cristiada*, vol. 1, 378. Only when President Cárdenas reopened the churches did Rodríguez surrender, according to Meyer. Jean Meyer, "El zapatismo va a la cristiada," *Revista Nexos*, Marzo (1997), 37-38. Arturo Warman's classic work on *zapatismo*, meanwhile, emphasizes the similarities between *El Tallarín* and Rubén Jaramillo's uprising: the post-revolutionary Mexican state betrayed the ideals of the revolution, forcibly opposed any groups that attempted to organize against the government, and drove Rodríguez and Jaramillo into revolt. Warman, *"We Come to Object,"* 190-192. Studies dedicated specifically to Rodríguez's rebellion are rare, however. A brief article by Sosa Elizaga places the 1934 revolt in south-eastern Morelos within the larger framework of the failed presidential bid of Antonio I. Villarreal and considers *El Tallarín* a social bandit with agrarian grievances. Raquel Sosa Elizaga, "Pequeña historia de una rebelión agraria durante el cardenismo: El caso de Enrique Rodríguez, El Tallarín," *Latino América*, 1995, 28 (1997), 91-103. The most thorough study of the rebellion is a recent undergraduate thesis at the state university of Morelos. Aguilar Domínguez argues that Rodríguez initially took to the sierra in 1934 after a shoot out with the local municipal president and gubernatorial candidate forced him to seek refuge in the hills. The main cause for the rebellion, then, resided in Rodríguez's personal conflict with local members of the official PNR, rather than religious freedom, which Aguilar Domínguez discounts as a main factor in the revolt. Ehecatl Dante Aguilar Domínguez, "'Enrique Rodríguez 'El Tallarín' y la denominada Segunda Cristiada en el Estado de Morelos, 1934-1938,'" undergraduate thesis, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, 2007. Historians, in other words, have tended to identify *El Tallarín* with various critiques of the maturing revolution. Hence, we currently possess a contradictory image of Rodríguez as failed mutineer, discontented *agrarista*, religious leader, and conservative member of the PNR. Yet as this chapter will show, the political, agrarian, and religious questions cannot be divorced from each other when considering the 1934 rebellion.



secondary lands usable only for livestock grazing. Enrique's three older brothers – Marcelino, Leonardo, and Félix – led him to join the revolution in 1911 at the young age of eleven, when he was already an orphan. His uncle, Catarino Perdomo, became one of the first *zapatista* colonels in the Liberating Army of the South, and his first cousin and the future governor of Morelos, Elpidio Perdomo, also rose to the rank of colonel. Enrique's eldest sibling, Marcelino, was promoted to general in 1914 by Zapata after fighting valiantly against Huerta's forces. Enrique, however, commanded troops under General Felipe Neri until the latter's death in 1914. He then joined his three brothers – known as *los tallarines* or the Rodríguez Brigade – fighting in eastern Morelos, where the seventeen-year-old gained intimate knowledge of his future theatre of operations. Marcelino was killed in combat in 1917, and shortly thereafter *carrancista* soldiers assassinated Enrique's brothers Leonardo and Félix.<sup>522</sup> By then, Enrique had obtained the rank of colonel and following his brothers' deaths probably joined General Francisco Mendoza's forces. Rodríguez had allies and family members across Morelos. He knew people throughout his home municipality, Tlaltizapán, located in the southern hotlands. In the east of Morelos along the border with Puebla, locals assured a government agent in 1934 that Rodríguez had many friends and relatives around Zacualpan and Tlacotepec.<sup>523</sup> This provided *El Tallarín* with a crucial network of support in eastern Morelos because Tlacotepec was home to a sizable militia and controlled large quantities of irrigation waters and fertile lands.<sup>524</sup> Experience in the revolution had taught Rodríguez to survive as a guerrilla fighter. Hiding in the mountains, hit and run attacks, sabotage, burning

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<sup>522</sup> For a brief biography of Marcelino Rodríguez, see López González, *Los compañeros*, 221.

<sup>523</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 258, exp. 1, Juan G. Cabral to Secretario Particular del Presidente de la República, 15 October 1934.

<sup>524</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Zacualpan (Zacualpan de Amilpas), exp. 23/3023, leg. 3, f. 76, Eligio Barreto to Pascual Ortiz Rubio, 19 August 1930.

archives, and political assassinations were the hallmarks of *zapatista* militancy that Rodríguez successfully employed two decades later. In the 1920s, Enrique and the *zapatistas* joined Álvaro Obregón's federal army and *El Tallarín* later returned to San Pablo Hidalgo to grow rice for commercial sale.<sup>525</sup> By 1934, Rodríguez had settled in the south-eastern municipal seat of Tepalcingo, where he cultivated a plot of ejidal land – a common occupation of former combatants in Morelos. A large village by 1940, some three thousand people inhabited Tepalcingo, most of whom were agricultural workers. Also like many former revolutionaries, Rodríguez now partook in local politics, and he probably held a position in the local militia.

Rodríguez's decision to launch his revolt from Anenecuilco – Zapata's home village – demonstrates the importance of the agrarian question. On Independence Day 1934, two months before Cárdenas's inauguration, numerous rebels symbolically gathered in the famous pueblo to pronounce the Plan Revolucionario Anenecuilco. Commencing the revolt from the cradle of the agrarian revolution allowed *El Tallarín* to link the rebellion to a grander struggle for liberty, land, and pueblo sovereignty that began two decades prior. Who exactly gathered that day at the revolutionary assembly in Anenecuilco remains unclear, although Francisco Franco, the pueblo's elder leader, likely attended the meeting. The village itself had secured abundant fertile lands during the 1920s, but heading into the winter of 1934–5, Anenecuilco entered a bitter dispute against several ambitious generals led by Aurelio Mejía, a former *zapatista*, who would despoil the pueblo of its two best fields.<sup>526</sup> Franco, charged with protecting

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<sup>525</sup> Aguilar Domínguez, "Enrique Rodríguez," 44-56.

<sup>526</sup> See AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Anenecuilco (Ayala), exp. 23/2961, leg. 1, ff. 357-358 Nabor A. Ojeda, to Depto. Agrario, 3 May 1935; Womack, *Zapata*, 378-380.

Anenecuilco's sacred land titles, was forced into hiding over the winter and authorities accused him of spreading "the idea that the current state of things must change."<sup>527</sup>

Also noteworthy, the Plan Revolucionario of 1934 specifically invoked the Plan de Ayala of 1911 and adopted the agrarian and democratic principles enshrined in the famous document. The first article of the 1934 Plan named Enrique Rodríguez as chief of the liberation movement. Second, it declared the July presidential elections null and named Aurelio Manrique, a prominent opposition leader hostile to official anticlericalism, president of a national government with authority to wage war against the regime imposed by Plutarco Elías Calles – by then the most powerful and polarizing figure in Mexican politics. Manrique had a long revolutionary background going back to the days before 1910 and served as governor of San Luis Potosí in the 1920s, but afterwards he became increasingly conservative and was forced into exile from 1929 to 1933 for publicly denouncing Calles.<sup>528</sup> Fourth, the Plan denounced all *callistas*, who had become "owners and lords [of] all public offices and sources of wealth."<sup>529</sup> Most importantly, in response to the national debate over the reforming of Article Three of the Constitution that would establish socialist education as official policy, the Plan fervently rejected the *callista* doctrine "that without any Authority seeks to educate our daughters as they please." Children, it asserted, deserved a "Christian education and morally under the...exclusive responsibility of their parents." The rebels would recognise the ranks of all former militants of the *zapatista* army if they joined the insurrection. The Plan Revolucionario Anenecuilco concluded by denouncing Calles for sending the nation's gold to England, gold which the *callistas* had appropriated from Mexico's agricultural

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<sup>527</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 258, exp. 1, Report by José Pérez Tejada G., 9 October 1934.

<sup>528</sup> Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies*, 431.

<sup>529</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 258, exp. 1, "Plan Revolucionario Anenecuilco," 15 September 1935.

and industrial production through corrupt banks. While less eloquent and shorter than the Plan de Ayala, these grievances against the regime were nonetheless frequent among the diverse independent political groups in Mexico. When opposition leader Antonio I. Villarreal issued a manifesto to the nation one month after *El Tallarín*, he echoed the sentiments expressed by the Plan Revolucionario Anenecuilco.<sup>530</sup>

The uprising in eastern Morelos, coupled with dozens of village petitions for land, forced Cárdenas to act. The president appeared in Anenecuilco in June 1935 to return the lands usurped by corrupt generals, although his actions provoked a long conflict with neighboring Villa de Ayala over the rich fields. Villages across Morelos began to receive provisional extensions of their *ejidos*; during the *cardenista sexenio*, the government doled out a further 70,000 hectares of land to rural communities. The presence of *El Tallarín* in fact pressured the government to carry out a second agrarian reform. Following a congress in Jojutla in 1935, an official document circulated stating that pending petitions for lands and waters were the most pressing problems among *campesinos*. The government ordered a brigade of engineers to descend on the districts of Jojutla, Cuautla, and Jonacatepec and resolve all outstanding petitions, “as the present agitation and the propaganda that the rebel Enrique Rodríguez spreads...merit such a response in order to further unite *campesinos* behind the National Government.”<sup>531</sup> The promise of lands, water, and forests helped to secure the loyalties of agricultural workers, eased tensions in agrarian communities, and to some extent reduced *El Tallarín*’s pool of potential supporters in the pueblos. Redistributing land, however, was not enough to quell the insurgency.

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<sup>530</sup> Sosa Elízaga, *Los códigos ocultos*, 37. Specifically, Villarreal denounced the PNR’s electoral fraud, attacks on religious freedom, and quest to seize control of children’s education from parents.

<sup>531</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Jojutla (Jojuta), exp. 23/3077, leg. 2, f. 412, Graciano Sánchez to Depto. Agrario, 3 December 1935.

### ***The Political Origins of the 1934 Rebellion***

With the backdrop of increasing agrarian unrest, *callista* conservatism, and political corruption, the governor of Morelos played a key role in creating conditions ripe for rebellion. José Refugio Bustamante, victor of the 1934 gubernatorial contest, was typical of Morelos's non-*zapatista* political class in the post-revolutionary period. He had not fought in the Mexican Revolution, but he became a *callista* and career politician beginning in the 1920s, when he served as municipal president of Cuautla and later as a state legislator in the early 1930s. Although the non-*zapatista* politicians in Morelos never opposed agrarian reform, Bustamante sought to channel all organization, mobilization, and demands of the popular classes through the government and official party. Politics under Governor Bustamante was notoriously corrupt. Politicos in the state government walked the Cuernavaca streets armed and frequently caused public disorder. The governor even hired gunmen in the district seats and stayed in close contact with loyal municipal presidents to control local opposition groups.<sup>532</sup>

In this atmosphere, Enrique Rodríguez encountered trouble. In preparation for the 1934 gubernatorial election, Rodríguez installed an office in Tepalcingo to support the candidacy of Francisco Álvarez (Bustamante's main rival in the internal PNR elections) and began holding public meetings throughout the south-eastern region, where he used his personal influence to rally supporters. The municipal president and cacique of Tepalcingo, Luis Mariscal, supported Bustamante, and tensions between he and Rodríguez escalated close to violence in 1933. Mariscal, as *cacique* of Tepalcingo, often employed violence to quell the opposition.<sup>533</sup> On 20 February 1934, during the large and raucous religious festival of Tepalcingo, when religious sensibilities were highly charged,

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<sup>532</sup> Aguilar Domínguez, "Los sucesores de Zapata," in *Historia de Morelos*, vol. 8, 72.

<sup>533</sup> For a volume that explores the variations of *caciquismo*, see Alan Knight and Wil Pansters eds., *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005).

Rodríguez approached Bustamante in a cantina to greet the official PNR candidate. Mariscal intervened and would not allow Rodríguez to speak with Bustamante. The municipal president then departed and moments later shots were fired. Gunmen pursued Rodríguez to the outskirts of the pueblo, but he escaped unscathed. The chief fled to the surrounding ranches and remained underground until September.<sup>534</sup>

Rodríguez's tumultuous experience with members of the PNR delivered him into the arms of the national opposition led by Antonio I. Villarreal, who campaigned against the official party's presidential nominee of 1934, Lázaro Cárdenas. At this juncture, the opposition considered Lázaro Cárdenas yet another lackey of Calles, as the latter had handpicked a series of presidents since 1928.<sup>535</sup> They perceived little difference between Calles and Cárdenas. Although the national opposition to the Cárdenas ticket initially lacked cohesion and suffered internal division, prior to the election it coalesced into the Confederación Revolucionaria de Partidos Independientes (Revolutionary Confederation of Independent Parties). From Morelos, over half a dozen local political parties and clubs joined the Confederation.<sup>536</sup> Calles's radical anticlericalism and the corruption of the regime began alienating once loyal supporters in the heartland of *zapatismo*.

This was made evident by the government's own reports. A Gobernación agent sent to Morelos to gather intelligence after the uprising of September 1934 painted Enrique Rodríguez as a *villarrealista*. According to the agent's lengthy investigation, the rebels maintained contact with Francisco Álvarez, who in January of that year had lost the internal PNR elections for governor to Bustamante. Álvarez, bitter after losing a close contest, opposed Calles and remained in contact with Rodríguez and other

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<sup>534</sup> Aguilar Domínguez, "Enrique Rodríguez," 60-85.

<sup>535</sup> Córdova, *La revolución en crisis*.

<sup>536</sup> Javier MacGregor Campuzano, "La Confederación Revolucionaria de Partidos Independientes, 1933-1934: entre la reacción y el progreso," *Iztapalapa* 44 (1998), 217-236.

*villarrealistas*. When Antonio Villarreal campaigned in Morelos before the July election, *El Tallarín* and others came out to support him. The Gobernación agent reported that Rodríguez had been in rebellion since 1 July 1934, the day of the presidential election, but he made no mention of the violent episode in Tepalcingo in February involving Rodríguez, Mariscal, Bustamante, and gunmen.<sup>537</sup>

Several months after the uprising began, the government commissioned Julia Mora Zapata, niece of the deceased caudillo and a trustworthy figure, to find Rodríguez, learn the reasons for his discontent, and convince him to lay down his arms. Mora went south to the small mining community of Huautla. She did not speak with the rebels themselves; however, after talking with locals, Mora concluded that Rodríguez and his followers principally took to the hills because “the current local authorities seek to harm them for having become disaffected in the latest political contest and have denounced them to federal forces. They have been sought out in their homes, and for fear of no protection, they have taken up the position in which they find themselves.”<sup>538</sup> The investigation fits with Rodríguez’s own reasons for initially revolting. At his surrender four years later in Mexico City, he told a reporter,

It was in ‘34...when I fled to the hills. I was then in Tepalcingo, working my land; but Governor Bustamante did not care for me, because I did not help him in his political campaign. Someone told me: “The forces are a going to come for you.” And I asked him why. And he answered me: “Because the governor is saying that you shouted: ‘Death to the Supreme Government, viva Villarreal.’” I thought, they won’t get a hold of me and I fled to the hills.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 258, exp. 1, Report by José Pérez Tejada G., 9 October 1934.

<sup>538</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/4, f. 18, “Memorándum que presenta ante el Señor Presidente la Señora Julia Mora,” 25 January 1935. Gildardo Magaña, a national politician and former secretary of Emiliano Zapata, commissioned Julia Mora with the mission.

<sup>539</sup> *Excélsior*, “‘El Tallarín’ es ahora un ciudadano pacífico,” 10 September 1938.

Rodríguez's relationship with an authoritarian governor, in other words, stood as his main reason for initially going underground. He did not deny any of the charges that he had rejected the official party. Nor did he mention the topics of socialist education or Cárdenas. Of course, a philosophical discussion with Mexico's "famous bandit" did not suit the occasion, but Rodríguez clearly argued that mere political self-defence provoked his flight to the highlands.

The insurrection began with a surprise attack. On 24 September, less than two weeks after pronouncing the Plan Revolucionario Anenecuilco, Rodríguez and a band of some forty-five individuals entered Tepalcingo at five o'clock in the morning. Fifteen men began to lay siege to the municipal president's home. Luis Mariscal, as municipal president and loyal supporter of Bustamante, was the governor's eyes and ears in distant Tepalcingo, and his gunmen had nearly taken Rodríguez's life during the Tepalcingo holiday in February. The assailants surrounded Mariscal's home and fired shots. Surprised, the municipal president fled his house while shooting his pistol at the attackers. He escaped unharmed and would henceforth update the governor and president on raids by *El Tallarín* during his mandate. The men proceeded to sack Mariscal's house, carrying off leather chaps, a saddle, ropes, spurs, and a horse – equipment for a cavalry. Afterwards, they gathered in the central plaza, read aloud their plan for government, shouted their support for Antonio Villarreal, and abandoned the village at seven o'clock in the morning, two hours after the siege began. The raiders levied no forced loans, nor did they target any other local residents, but they destroyed the telephone line between Tepalcingo and the district seat, Jonacatepec.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/15, ff. 167-70, Luis Mariscal to Cárdenas, 9 December 1934.



Unrest quickly began to unfold. A day after the attack on Tepalcingo, on 25 September, federal soldiers charged with carrying out the generals' land grab appeared in Anenecuilco to apprehend the local agrarian leader, Francisco Franco, and despoil the pueblo of its best fields.<sup>541</sup> To this end, unknown men erected fences on the pueblo's lands and the authorities nabbed Franco, who managed to escape but was forced into hiding for several months over the winter. That such events occurred in the famous village was symptomatic of the state of *callista* politics in Morelos and contributed to growing turmoil throughout the region. The generals accused Franco of colluding with *El Tallarín* and they spread false statements about the elder village leader in the press.<sup>542</sup> It is quite plausible, however, that the events in Tepalcingo the previous day provided the pretext for the generals to force the Anenecuilco leaders to hand over the pueblo's cherished land titles and intimidate Franco into signing an agreement. After the soldiers appeared in Anenecuilco, on 26 September 1934, *El Tallarín* led men on horseback to briefly occupy the far south-eastern municipality of Axochiapan. Locals Jesús García, José Solís, and Pedro Pliego joined forces to overwhelm the village. A fourth consecutive day of tumults occurred in Cuautla, when farmers assassinated the local chief of police.<sup>543</sup>

Was the sudden unrest in Morelos connected to local agrarian and political affairs or part of a larger rebellion inspired by Antonio Villarreal from Nuevo León? The rebels in Morelos did not possess direct links to Villarreal, but clearly they sympathized with his movement.<sup>544</sup> While it is true that in 1934 government supporters labeled most members

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<sup>541</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Anenecuilco (Ayala), exp. 23/2961, leg. 1, f. 359, Miguel Franco to Cárdenas, 6 January 1935.

<sup>542</sup> AGA, Dotación de Tierras, Anenecuilco (Ayala), exp. 23/2961, leg. 1, f. 421-422, document not signed, 25 April 1935.

<sup>543</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 258, exp. 1, Report by José Pérez Tejada G., 9 October 1934.

<sup>544</sup> Sosa Elízaga, *Los códigos ocultos*, 51.

of the political opposition as *villarrealistas*, and that in October Villarreal announced a national rebellion to begin on 20 November, proof of a direct link with *El Tallarín* is based on circumstantial evidence. Luis Mariscal, the municipal president of Tepalcingo, was the only informant to assert a clear connection between Rodríguez and Villarreal, and his allegations must be viewed with skepticism. He claimed that “extraofficial reports” given to him revealed that on 17 September, “days before the vandalic movement broke out, ex-general Villarreal was at a ranch named ‘Los Metates,’ the site where several characters went to sign the said government plan.”<sup>545</sup> Los Metates was an uninhabited ranch, an hour from the south-eastern train station of Huitchila. Mariscal wrote that Gobernación agents sent to gather intelligence on the uprisings also learned of the secret meeting at Los Metates between Villarreal and Rodríguez. General Miguel Henríquez Guzman, the army’s commander sent to crush *El Tallarín*, additionally mentioned that “they constantly receive money and War materials and spread news that rebel movements against the Government exists in the entire Republic.”<sup>546</sup> Here, caution should be exercised with the evidence. The *cacique* of Tepalcingo had clear political motives for reporting rumors, and he greatly admired General Henríquez, with whom he had been in contact with since the uprisings in September. Finally, Villarreal spent the months after the July election in Monterrey and the United States, not in Morelos.<sup>547</sup> Even if the meeting at Los Metates occurred, Villarreal’s revolt from the north fizzled during the early months of 1935 and never displayed the capacity to send arms south or

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<sup>545</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/15, ff. 167-170, Luis Mariscal to Cárdenas, 9 December 1934.

<sup>546</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/4, ff. 13-15, Rodrigo Talamante to Secretario de Guerra y Marina, 26 December 1934.

<sup>547</sup> Gloria Sánchez Azcona, *El General Antonio I. Villarreal, civilista de la Revolución Mexicana* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1980).

support an insurgency in Morelos.<sup>548</sup> Logistical obstacles limited an alliance between the insurrectionists of Morelos and the north, even though *El Tallarín* clearly sympathized and associated with the *villarrealistas*. Most importantly, the flimsiness of the evidence linking *El Tallarín* to political *villarealismo* reveals that Rodríguez had his own agenda in Morelos; he was never beholden to any national politician, and nor was he a proxy gunman.

The spats of violence in Tepalcingo, Axochiapan, and Cuautla shared evidence of common political grievances with those of the North, but they had roots in local agrarian and political issues particular to Morelos, and many of the persecuted individuals would find refuge in the sierra under Rodríguez's command, swelling insurgent ranks to between one and two hundred men. Many had prior experience with arms, having served in the village militias that were still present in Morelos in the 1930s. *El Tallarín*, for instance, harassed the militia chief of Los Hornos on several occasions for refusing to join the insurgency.<sup>549</sup> None of the guerrillas appear to have participated in the *cristero* uprising of the late 1920s. The rebels' mobility and hit and run tactics allowed them to stay one step ahead of annihilation by the federal army. General Henríquez commanded five columns of soldiers and pursued *El Tallarín* for the remainder of 1934. In the first ninety days of the hunt into the mountains, the army failed to engage the guerrillas even once. From the field, Henríquez noted the obstacles posed by a combination of endless hills from which the army columns could be seen from great distances, and deep ravines and canyons, in which the rebels could hide and provision themselves at isolated ranches. The rebels in hiding, according to Henríquez, survived on small rations of beans and

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<sup>548</sup> For the *villarrealistas* in the north, see Sosa Elízaga, *Los códigos ocultos*, 37-43.

<sup>549</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/15, ff. 158, 164, Inocente Vázquez to Cárdenas, 23 September 1935 and Dolores Campos Espinosa to Cárdenas, 27 January 1935.

tortillas. In order to win the support of the local population, the army paid the local ranchers in food and forage for their animals, even though General Henríquez remained suspicious of their sympathies and considered them ignorant peasants, seeking adventure and easily manipulated by demagogues.<sup>550</sup>

By the end of 1934, then, a small regional rebellion had broken out in Morelos. It began over politics in the midst of growing agrarian upheaval. The repression during the gubernatorial and presidential campaigns led Enrique Rodríguez and his village followers to the hills. They shared the grievances of other groups in Mexico opposed to the PNR regime, and they became a draw for such elements. Within two years of the initial uprisings, the rebellion had spread territorially from the south-eastern corner of the state to include the northern highlands of Morelos, especially the borders with Estado de México and Puebla and areas surrounding the Popocatepetl Volcano. Two, or possibly even three, guerrilla squads operated in the highlands under the banner of *El Tallarín*. Dividing into smaller bands allowed the insurgents to move swiftly and evade the army. For instance, Rodríguez and his men appeared early one morning in Ocuituco, Morelos and abducted the village tax collector from his home. The rebels took him to Hueyapan while still dressed only in his underwear and executed him in the central plaza in front of a large crowd.<sup>551</sup> Rural attacks spilled over into villages in Puebla.<sup>552</sup> Despite this activity, the army never cornered the guerrillas for a decisive battle and repeatedly failed to capture Rodríguez. Furthermore, no evidence exists to suggest that local *agrarista* militias or paramilitary forces familiar with the local terrain aided the army in its quest to

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<sup>550</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/4, ff. 13-15, Rodrigo Talamante to Secretario de Guerra y Marina, 26 December 1934.

<sup>551</sup> Friedlander, *Being Indian*, 47; AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/15, f. 134, Augustina Sánchez to Cárdenas, 17 February 1936.

<sup>552</sup> For attacks on rural communities in Puebla, see AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/15, ff. 65, 91, 98, 109.

quash *El Tallarín*. Armed villagers had backed the federal government in 1920, 1923, and 1927, but they would not pursue one of their own in 1934.

### ***Attacks on Federal Teachers***

*El Tallarín* countered the education mobilizations of 1934 by attacking rural teachers. The rebels viewed SEP employees of the 1930s as agents of an atheist state and as outsiders, who were not welcome in the pueblos. Teachers, tax collectors, PNR members, and militiamen were all fair game in their eyes. “El Tallarín,” recalled one woman from Hueyapan, pursued “all those who worked for the government.”<sup>553</sup> In January 1935, the head of the SEP in Morelos, Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso, provided the first reference to the deaths of teachers. Educators Gilberto Méndez and Silvestre González were both killed that winter, although it is not clear if their deaths occurred in the same place and at the same time. Méndez was accidentally shot by “federal troops during confusion with a militia.” González, on the other hand, was put to death “by the cristero rebels of “El Tallarín,” who, after hanging him, placed a notice on him that said: ‘dead for imposing socialist teachings.’”<sup>554</sup> Unfortunately, the director provided no more details of the clash, but fear spread among educators in the countryside and attendance in classrooms stood at a new low. Teachers wanted a transfer away from isolated villages to locations closer to the cities.<sup>555</sup> These deaths were the first killings of SEP employees associated with *El Tallarín*.

Similar to the *zapatistas* of the 1910s, rebel actions quieted during the rainy and planting season of the summer, but in September 1935, just before the school year began,

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<sup>553</sup> Quoted in Friedlander, *Being Indian*, 47.

<sup>554</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 17, f. 8, Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso to Depto. Enseñanza Rural, 27 March 1935.

<sup>555</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 45, exp. 34, ff. 2-9, Enrique Contreras to Director de Educación Federal en Morelos, 25 December 1935.

attacks on pueblos and teachers resumed. A few weeks after a brief battle occurred in the mining town of Huautla, two normal school students in their mid-20s, Facundo Bonilla and Camerino Valle, were put to death near Los Momotles, Tlaquiltenango. The two youths had been traveling on a near-empty bus destined to take them to their posts in Colonia Hidalgo and Los Hornos, respectively. A group of insurgents under the command of *El Tallarín* assaulted the coach and captured the two educators, accusing them of believing in socialist education. The assailants ordered Bonilla and Valle off the bus, tied them up, and then beat and shot them, leaving the two bodies by the roadside. Both youths died shortly thereafter from their wounds.<sup>556</sup> It remains unclear how many teachers became victims of *El Tallarín*. By the last year of his rebellion in 1938, the national daily *Excélsior* estimated that Rodríguez had been responsible for the deaths of seven rural teachers. The most recent incident had occurred in Cuautometitla, Puebla. Assailants killed the local teacher, José Ramírez Martínez, and members of the municipal government. Rebels hung the four bodies from trees in the central plaza and fled the village.<sup>557</sup>

Other times, insurgents intimidated a teacher and spared his or her life. On 19 June 1936 at six o'clock in the afternoon, a group of armed men attacked the school in Buena Vista del Monte, a hamlet of 200 inhabitants in the mountains north of Cuernavaca. As the teacher dismissed the students after a full day of classes, a girl entered the building alarmed and pleading for help for her family members. Upon exiting the school building, the teacher encountered several armed individuals. The assailants shouted insults at him and poked him with their rifle barrels, preventing him from

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<sup>556</sup> For accounts of the killings, see ACCJM, Penal, exp. 10/937, ff. 9, 19-20, Eliseo Bandala to Agente de Ministerio Público Federal, 21 August 1936 and Guillermo Tirado to Agente de Ministerio Público Federal, 27 October 1936.

<sup>557</sup> *Excélsior*, 2 March 1938.

passing. Seventy armed men, the teacher later claimed, sacked the village. The fifteen local men who comprised the village militia were absent, and the attackers began to take arms from the houses of militiamen. Villagers fled the pueblo. Only women, children, and the teacher remained in the hamlet. Surrounded, the teacher could not escape, and the attackers shoved and kicked him into the school building. The rebels demanded all documents pertaining to socialist education, arms, clothes, and money. Several of them began to call for the teacher's death and began to interrogate him. The unnamed teacher recalled, "the women and children present at the time, who were in tears and wailing because of the difficult situation I found myself, lent me courageous help. They made the attackers...see that my educational work in the school extended only to practical teachings."<sup>558</sup> The educator denied teaching socialist education, but the armed men continued their threats until their unidentified chief, most likely *El Tallarín*, entered the school building. The teacher repeated that the women and children's pleas were correct and that he had abstained from teaching socialism. These words half-convinced the chief to spare the instructor's life. He left the educator with a pamphlet and threatened to return and kill him. The rebels retreated after sacking the pueblo, taking with them even foodstuffs. The teacher never provided the name of the chief, but, given that *El Tallarín* based his operations out of the northeastern corner of Morelos around the Popocatepetl Volcano in 1936, it is quite likely that Rodríguez or someone closely associated with him did interrogate this specific teacher and ultimately freed him.<sup>559</sup> In any case, the attack shows that the rebels distinguished between the state and its specific policies, between

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<sup>558</sup> AHSEP, Escuelas Primarias, caja 5811, exp. 7, f. 4, Eliseo Bandala to Director de Educ., 25 June 1936.

<sup>559</sup> After the War Minister transferred General Geneovevo de la O out of Morelos in 1925, the village of Santa María no longer dominated the wooded highlands of northwestern Morelos, which would help to explain why *El Tallarín* could operate as far westwards as Buena Vista del Monte. In late 1935, rebels also attacked Tepoztlán, located east of Buena Vista del Monte, although, again, it is not clear if *El Tallarín* led the assault. AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/4, f. 7, Conde y Rodríguez to Cárdenas, 12 November 1935.

education and anticlericalism. Teachers could continue to educate village children, but only if they respected pueblo traditions and abstained from any discussion of atheism.

Attacking rural teachers, especially those with an interest in socialism, was one expression of the rebellion's religious component. Another was Rodríguez's attempts to forge an alliance with the Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad – the principal civilian institution that backed the *cristeros* of the late 1920s and 1930s against the federal government. The Liga, an ultra Catholic organization, would appear an unlikely ally of a guerrilla from *zapatista* country given that some wealthy landowners and rich Catholics possessed links to the centralized and autocratic lay organization. And while the Liga had endorsed, financed, and armed the *cristeros* of 1926–9, it had less success doing so in the 1930s and was ridden by factionalism.<sup>560</sup> But, as with *El Tallarín's* strategic adherence to *villarrealismo*, the Liga presented the chief with an ideologically sympathetic ally, and possessed a national profile and a history of confronting the state. As early as 1934, *El Tallarín* and his men met a delegation of the Liga from Puebla in the small village of Zalostoc, Morelos. That December Rodríguez recognized the Liga's program as established in the 1934 Plan de Cerro Gordo and agreed to coordinate his action with the institution's directorate.<sup>561</sup> While the accord was easily signed, the correspondence exchanged between the Liga and the Morelos insurgent demonstrate the difficulties of forging such an alliance. *El Tallarín* warned the Catholic organization not to avoid the agrarian question: "if the league does nothing more than defend Religion,

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<sup>560</sup> Timothy Clarke Hanley, 'Civilian Leadership of the Cristero Movement: The Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico, 1925–1938', PhD diss., Columbia University, 1977.

<sup>561</sup> AHUNAM, Aurelio Robles Acevedo, caja 23, exp. 111, f. 118, Agreement by Enrique Rodríguez and Narciso Rodríguez, 19 December 1934, The Plan de Cerro Gordo refused to recognize the federal and state governments and the 1917 Constitution; however, it did not attempt to roll back the social and agrarian legislation of the revolution and recognized women's right to vote.



and worst if it is in line with *asendados* [*sic*], be sure that blood will continue to spill.”<sup>562</sup> Rodríguez boasted of his control over the pueblos, urged the Liga to commit to the armed movement, and pledged his allegiance to universal Catholic values. “We are completely Religious and deeply respect parish priests (*los padrecitos*),” another letter asserted.<sup>563</sup> Although convinced of the movement’s genuine religious motive, the Liga failed to furnish sufficient war materials for the *cristeros* of the 1930s, and the correspondence reveal an uneasy alliance with *El Tallarín*. Again, like the *villarrealistas* of northern Mexico, the Catholic lay organization offered the insurgents of Morelos nominal support at best, while failing to devote material resources necessary for war.

### ***Surrender***

The scenario of a reformist president heeding the cries of the popular classes undermined *El Tallarín*’s rebellion, as Cárdenas had watered-down anticlericalism by 1936, begun his agrarian reform in earnest, and exiled Calles from Mexico. Still, the insurgent displayed no signs of surrendering in exchange for amnesty and a good plot of land. Mistrust of politicians stood as a common characteristic of *zapatista* chiefs in the post-revolutionary period. The revolt’s influence, then, was diffused in the pueblos, effective only in the larger scheme of national politics by its longevity, military prowess, and its ability to capture the popular imagination in the Mexico City press. *El Tallarín* may have represented one of the most dangerous and feared guerrilla combatants of the post-revolutionary period, but, politically, Rodríguez could not, at least in the final years, capitalize on the bursts of popular outrage against socialist education or *callismo*’s

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<sup>562</sup> AHUNAM, Aurelio Robles Acevedo, caja 23, exp. 111, f. 11, Enrique Rodríguez to unknown, not dated.

<sup>563</sup> AHUNAM, Aurelio Robles Acevedo, caja 23, exp. 111, ff. 135-136, Unknown to Enrique Rodríguez, 15 December 1936.

agrarian conservatism. By 1938, *El Tallarín* was ready to come down from the cold mountains.

Only when Rodríguez's first cousin, Elpidio Perdomo, assumed the governorship of Morelos in 1938 did the guerrilla take advantage of an opportunity to end the rebellion. Perdomo, like his cousin, grew up in the southern hotlands and rose to the rank of colonel during the revolution. He remained in the army until the mid-1930s and was stationed in the northern city of Monterrey. Authorities knew Perdomo had a relationship with Rodríguez going back to their youth, and shortly after the rebellion broke out in the fall of 1934, Perdomo traveled south on behalf of the government in search of his cousin. Perdomo arrived in Tepalcingo and failed to convince *El Tallarín* to surrender his arms, although it is not clear if he actually spoke with Rodríguez.<sup>564</sup>

Perdomo had campaigned on the promise that he would convince *El Tallarín* to lay down arms, and Cárdenas backed him on this key issue. Previous attempts by the president, Julia Mora Zapata, and Perdomo had failed to persuade the chief to give up the struggle. But the political scenario in the summer of 1938 offered Rodríguez an opening with Bustamante now out of power and his first cousin in. Close friends of Rodríguez contacted individuals in the Perdomo administration regarding surrender in exchange for guarantees that the rebel would face no criminal charges and could return to a peaceful civil life. Then, relatives of the two cousins became involved. Genaro Perdomo, aged sixty-two and uncle to the governor and rebel, met and spoke with his nephew Enrique after eight days of searching for him in the hills. Genaro convinced his nephew Enrique to wait close to their home village of San Pablo Hidalgo at a point named "la Piedra Escrita" while he went to Cuernavaca to update the governor. Genaro and Elpidio

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<sup>564</sup> AGN, Gobernación, IPS, caja 258, exp. 1, Report by José Pérez Tejada G., 9 October 1934. Perdomo returned to the north and does not appear to have had any contact with his cousin until 1938.

together returned to “la piedra escrita.” After what we can only imagine to be affectionate greetings between two cousins who have not seen each other in many years, the governor offered Enrique safety and guaranteed protection and the rebel agreed to give up the life of a guerrilla. Perdomo then traveled to Mexico City in order to meet with the Ministry of Defence and ensure the amnesty. The federal government agreed to the deal. Rodríguez wrote and signed a short letter of surrender to Cárdenas. He assured the president that the governor had worked out the conditions of his amnesty and requested “guarantees...in order to recognise your good government and dedicate myself to a tranquil honorable life.”<sup>565</sup> Two weeks later on the 7 September, *El Tallarín* presented himself in the governor’s office, and the following day the two drove with their uncle Genaro to Mexico City. There, at the Ministry of Defence, after four years of rebellion, *El Tallarín* finally surrendered.<sup>566</sup> During the surrender negotiations, Rodríguez appears to have conceded little more than a promise to lay down arms and return to civilian life. He faced no criminal charges. Cárdenas, thus, had responded to popular pressures from Morelos by redistributing land, watering down socialist education, and granting *El Tallarín* amnesty, thereby recreating the pact between *zapatismo* and the state.<sup>567</sup>

Indeed, it was Perdomo’s personal intervention on behalf of the federal government that provided Rodríguez with the opportunity to surrender. The state governors of post-revolutionary Mexico often performed such intermediary roles between

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<sup>565</sup> AGN, Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, exp. 559.1/15, f. 42, Enrique Rodríguez to Cárdenas, 22 August 1938.

<sup>566</sup> *Excelsior*, 8, 10 September 1938.

<sup>567</sup> Cárdenas responded to similar popular pressures across Mexico and rolled back reforms that offended the rural population. For works that explore the negotiated settlement of post-revolutionary Mexico and the limits of federal power, see Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*; Boyer, *Becoming Campesino*.

Mexico City and the general population.<sup>568</sup> By 1938, the federal regime had redistributed additional lands in Morelos and it no longer sought to implement anticlerical legislation at the local level. Four years of struggle had inched the villages closer to the ideals of “*tierra, libertad y religion*.” Perdomo offered *El Tallarín* the confidence to give up life on the run. If Bustamante’s hand-picked successor had won the Morelos gubernatorial election, Rodríguez would not have come down from the mountains. The caudillo’s mistrust of government stuck with him until the last days, as a politician’s word was no good. Thus, gubernatorial politics stood at the center of Rodríguez’s reasons for initially fleeing to the sierra in 1934 and for ultimately deciding to surrender in 1938, while religious discontent fueled widespread indignation in rural Morelos during the rebellion. After the election for governor in 1938, Bustamante, who had once attempted to control Rodríguez by force, was defeated, out of the political picture, and no longer a threat. Both Rodríguez and his cousin Perdomo, in fact, had escaped attempts on their lives by Governor Bustamante’s goons, but the former *zapatista* revolutionaries survived and lived to tell the tale.

A reporter from *Excélsior* interviewed *El Tallarín* shortly after his surrender at the Ministry of Defence. The rugged chief shed his riding boots, pistol, and ammunition belt and dressed in a new suit and shoes for the occasion. “He’s a man of the countryside, with skin tanned by the sun,” wrote the journalist. His left cheek was bruised black and blue from a blow: “A horse gave it to me,” said Rodríguez. His right hand was partly disabled after taking a bullet several years before. *Excélsior* described *El Tallarín* as a victim of circumstance. Rodríguez denied all the reports in the press of the crimes attributed to him over the past four years and stated “that he never assaulted the people;

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<sup>568</sup> Jürgen Buchenau and William H. Beezley, eds., *State Governors in the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1952: Portraits in Conflict, Courage, and Corruption* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

that his famed reputation as a bandit has been formed by his ‘political enemies.’”<sup>569</sup> The chief departed the Ministry of Defence carrying a letter of amnesty in his pocket approved by Cárdenas. He returned to Morelos and was practically out of public view thereafter. *El Tallarín*’s life after surrender remains obscure. He briefly mentioned at his surrender that he would not return to farming and would probably lend a hand in the Perdomo administration. An article by *El Universal* in 1939, when Perdomo was entrenched in a battle against the state legislature, mentions accusations by legislators that the governor employed his famous cousin and a group of *pistoleros* to intimidate the legislative body during a political standoff.<sup>570</sup> The fog surrounding Rodríguez’s life after rebellion only thickens in regards to his death, which apparently occurred within a few years after his 1938 surrender. Some eastern *morelenses* believed he fell in the violent political clashes of Perdomo’s governorship, while one former *zapatista* recalled that he died a drunkard. In any case, the two causes of death are not mutually exclusive, and they suggest that after laying down arms *El Tallarín* lived in the shadows and struggled to settle into civilian life.<sup>571</sup>

*El Tallarín*’s rebellion was the first to erupt in post-revolutionary Morelos and it established a pattern among those *morelenses* who carried the torch of *zapatismo* into the mid-twentieth century. Rodríguez and his successors were all motivated by the growing influence of centralized government in pueblo life. During the dry season of 1942–3, for instance, over one hundred *campesinos* from eastern Morelos took up arms to evade federal authorities and defend agrarian self-sufficiency. In what became known as the

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<sup>569</sup> *Excelsior*, 10 September 1938.

<sup>570</sup> *El Universal*, 3 May 1939.

<sup>571</sup> López Méndez et al., *Los campesinos*, vol. 1, 174; Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Programa de Historia Oral, PHO-Z/CRMG/1/64, Interview with Luis Campos Herrera, 27 September 1974. Although not available at the time of writing, the latter collection also contains an interview with Juan Torres Casamata (PHO-C/4/14) that may shed more light on *El Tallarín*’s demise.

*bola chiquita*, villagers from Zacualpan, Tlacotepec, and Hueyapan – the same region where *El Tallarín* possessed strong support – resisted a coercive campaign of conscription by the federal army to serve in Mexico City during the end of the 1942 harvest.<sup>572</sup> Moreover, as Tanalís Padilla has shown in the case of *jaramillistas* in the 1940s and 1950s, farmers increasingly resented politicians’ heavy-handed involvement in the local sugar economy and met state repression with mobilization and armed struggle.<sup>573</sup> Likewise, for both Rodríguez and Jaramillo, repression following the gubernatorial contests of Morelos marked key moments on the path to rebellion, further emphasizing the key middle roles played by governors during the process of political centralization. After each violent occasion, rural pressures forced the presidents of Mexico to intervene, renegotiate the terms of *zapatista* loyalty, and offer amnesty to the movements’ leaders.

Nonetheless, what separates *El Tallarín* most from his successors is the degree to which the defence of religion formed a central component of his uprising. Only during the first years of the Cárdenas presidency did official anticlericalism provoke a defiant response in the Morelos countryside. It did so in 1934 because, unlike the high-range ecclesiastical persecution of the late 1920s, socialist education clashed more with daily religious culture. Before 1934, religion fostered communal solidarity and provided an autonomous space for pueblos to operate. Teachers’ subsequent attempts to undermine pious beliefs smacked of central imposition. Village religious devotions, in this sense, formed an integral part of the *zapatista* concept of local sovereignty, which explains why Morelos became an important battleground in the Segunda. Anticlericalism in the form of socialist education threatened village liberty. And despite the Catholic Church’s weak

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<sup>572</sup> López Méndez et al., *Los campesinos*, vol. 1, 165-221.

<sup>573</sup> Padilla, *Rural Resistance*.

institutional foundations in states such as Morelos and Campeche (where folk religious traditions thrived), official anticlericalism in the 1930s mobilized groups as diverse as parents of schoolchildren, former *zapatista* officers, and middle- and upper class laywomen. The Segunda, then, as Ben Fallaw has showed, tended to unite Catholics across Mexico regardless of the Church's organizational strength.<sup>574</sup> The *segunderos* were more geographically and socially diverse than the *cristeros* of the late 1920s, and issues beyond religion could motivate resistance.

For *El Tallarín*, religion, while it connected his revolt to ordinary concerns, was not even the initial factor that led him to the hills. Instead, local politics proved decisive in his revolt and surrender, which draws attention to the consolidation of the PNR during the 1930s. As we saw, Rodríguez's struggle had origins in the internal elections of the Morelos PNR held in January 1934, lending support to Lorenzo Meyer's finding that the real contest for power during the Maximato already occurred within the PNR rather than in constitutional elections between rival parties.<sup>575</sup> These internal contests reinforced political centralization, but, as the case of Morelos shows, the party hierarchy in Mexico City could not control conflicts between its members at the state and municipal levels. Rodríguez's troubles with the PNR also demonstrate that the party was hostile to *campesino* leaders during the Maximato.<sup>576</sup> In turn, the experience of Morelos in the mid-1930s suggests the *callistas* did not succumb to popular pressures and negotiate with the opposition to the degree that the *cardenistas* did. Unlike Saturino Cedillo, whose revolt from San Luis Potosí the president crushed in 1938, Rodríguez had the sense and the political fortune to quit while he was ahead. *El Tallarín*, as he exited the political

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<sup>574</sup> Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation*.

<sup>575</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, *Historia de la revolución mexicana, 1928-1934*, vol. 12: *Los inicios de la institucionalización* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1978), 273.

<sup>576</sup> Garrido, *El partido*, 171-173.

scene in the 1930s, stood as a defender of agrarian self-reliance, traditional chieftainship, and pueblo religious liberty, which was why the pueblos supported him.



## **Conclusion: The Diversity of the Morelos Countryside**

This dissertation has explored different types of rural communities in post-revolutionary Morelos that also displayed various kinds of behaviors, but what ultimately united the diverse countryside was the shared belief that legitimate political authority in Mexico rested upon the sovereignty of the pueblos. Put simply, the national regime could only assert control over rural Morelos once a critical mass of the pueblos consented to rule by a new set of elites. Although the concept of village sovereignty had roots in Mexico's liberal past, the pueblos' proclivity to engage the federal government over issues of politics, land reform, water resource management, and schools reveals that these communities did not fight a revolution to return to a utopian bygone era before sugar plantations dominated the rural landscape. Rather, the idea of village sovereignty evolved in the 1920s and 1930s to include new political and institutional ties to the federal government that were used to enhance local control of village life at the expense of the old elites now in remission. The alliance with the federal government, that is to say, made the pueblos more sovereign during this period. Of course, those new links to Mexico City required constant dialogue, countless negotiations, and not infrequent conflict before *campesinos* and national elites reached a settlement. This study, then, contributes to recent cultural histories of the Mexican Revolution that analyze the attitudes and strategies of rural folks in order to explain their relationships with the national state. It also shows that moral and economic explanations of village conduct are by themselves insufficient to grasp the diversity of the Morelos countryside. Instead, an approach is needed that integrates these cultural, moral, and economic analytical tools into a single approach that sheds new light on post-revolutionary villages.

### ***Research Findings***

The most important national figure to negotiate Morelos's reincorporation into the federal system was Plutarco Elías Calles, who did so primarily from 1926 to 1934 by backing the pueblos in conflicts with Cuernavaca; establishing PNR offices in all the municipalities; delivering definitive land resolutions; creating water juntas along the region's principal rivers; and building primary schools in every village. Calles was in fact significantly more committed to bringing the Morelos peasantry into the arms of the state than had been his predecessor Álvaro Obregón, who unsuccessfully attempted to resolve local political and agrarian conflicts with the authority of his personal charisma. In contrast, Calles used the tools and institutions of the state to forge a closer relationship with *morelense* pueblos. The peasantry, meanwhile, found a responsive president in Calles, who sent personal representatives to oversee local electoral disputes; ousted abusive governors at the behest of village petitions; and backed the pueblos in conflicts with local elites. The decline of *callismo* and the rise of *cardenismo* in the mid-1930s, however, ruptured the alliance between Morelos and Mexico City, forcing President Cárdenas to distribute more land in the state, reform the pedagogy taught in federal primary schools, and negotiate *El Tallarín's* surrender. Thus, while state formation during the *cardenista* presidency certainly deepened ties between the center and periphery, it was Calles, not Cárdenas, who receives credit for being the key architect of the post-revolutionary state in Morelos. If a building metaphor is allowed, Obregón laid the foundation for a *zapatista* home in the national regime; Calles then poured the concrete, laid the bricks, and installed the plumbing system; and Cárdenas plugged leaks in the roof and donated a garden to finish the job.

Each president negotiated sovereignty with the pueblos by engaging the countryside on matters of politics, agrarian reform, the irrigation system, and village

schooling. Chapter one showed how governance in Morelos was contingent on a critical mass of pueblo consent, which explains why political stability did not return to the state government until after 1926. From studying Cuernavaca's mistakes in the mid-1920s, the *callistas* realized that riding roughshod over local electoral outcomes was counterproductive to state formation. In turn, villagers influenced national elites by participating in the internal primary elections of the official PNR. These findings demonstrate that the Sonoran regime did not and could not simply impose itself on the rural population. Rather, the regime encountered a mobilized peasantry that it learned to govern in order to win crucial rural support during the national crises of the 1920s and 1930s.

One of the most successful ways that Mexico City reincorporated Morelos into the national regime was through local participation in the ejidal assemblies. Land committees offered villagers room to maneuver politically by establishing formal channels of communication between rural folks and national authorities, giving the pueblos more ability to defend their natural resources against abusive state politicians and local elites hostile to agrarian reform. The land petitions of the 1920s, meanwhile, revealed that villagers were less concerned about the recognition of old rights (i.e., restitution) than they were with gaining immediate and secured control of their *ejidos* in the form of presidential land grants. Morelos peasants were therefore more politically pragmatic than scholars have given them credit for since the village land committees offered real benefits to *campesinos* and were not just vehicles for agrarian authoritarianism. The agrarian reform, in other words, was both a centralizing and popular force.

In contrast to the ejidal assemblies, the federal water juntas were not as successful in serving as bridgeheads between Morelos and Mexico City because *campesinos*

considered the National Agrarian Commission to be a more effective channel to redress local grievances than the National Irrigation Commission, which Calles did not establish until 1926. The federal councils, moreover, were drawn into inter-pueblo feuds over irrigation waters, leaving the locales in de facto control of the region's rivers still in 1940. Only when the juntas negotiated ejidal debts, invested in hydraulic works, and supported downstream pueblos lacking sufficient waters did farmers cooperate with the federal councils. Water was crucial to the village economy because it allowed communities to grow rice for commercial sale and earn scarce cash in the 1920s; hence, the widespread opposition to burdensome usage fees imposed by the juntas. Furthermore, the rice boom in Morelos clearly proves that *campesinos* were not reluctant participants in commercial agriculture. On the contrary, lowland villages grew as much rice as possible, which explains why access to the liquid was the most divisive issue in rural disputes. The pueblo green revolution, in short, pitted neighboring communities against one another with federal authorities caught in between them.

Similar to the ejidal assemblies, federal schools in Morelos were well-received by the peasantry because they promoted pueblo reconstruction and gave women a stronger voice in the community. *Morelenses* found unusually creative ways to incorporate federal schooling into village life. Unique school gardens, for example, grew cash crops that funded village daycares and cooperatives that lessened *campesinos*' dependency on traditional money lenders. It was not until 1934, when the implementation of socialist education in rural classrooms attacked the pueblos' religious culture, that villagers rejected federal schools. Socialist education's attempt to eradicate local religion on the grounds that priests were now class enemies of the peasantry reveals a new degree of radicalism in the federal government's project. It also explains why Morelos became a central battleground in the Segunda Cristiada of the 1930s. The Segunda, as the rebellion

of *El Tallarín* shows, involved not just a defense of religion but also political and agrarian issues. Once Cárdenas backed off anticlericalism and negotiated *El Tallarín*'s surrender, the pueblos were reintegrated in the national system.

It took the federal government two decades to reassert control fully over rural Morelos because the diversity of the region's villages required time for national elites to learn the complexities of the countryside. Different types of communities could be found in every region of Morelos. Take for example Anenecuilco, located in lowland rice country, and Santa María Ahuacatitlán, found in the wooded highlands of northwestern Morelos. Anenecuilco and Santa María were the home villages of the region's two greatest generals (Zapata and Genovevo de la O, respectively), and these communities displayed clear signs of corporate behavior. Both were pre-Hispanic villages, in the struggle for centuries. Both aggressively defended their natural resources in the 1920s and 1930s. Neither would accept a simple land grant; each spent years in litigation pursuing the symbolically important category of "restitution"—recognition of the pueblo's historic right to the land. Yet both Anenecuilco and Santa María embraced the federal schooling project. Pueblos such as these could be found in every region of Morelos. In the east, where *El Tallarín* had strong support, Tlacotepec was another powerful pueblo and home to a sizable militia that controlled significant quantities of irrigation waters. Likewise, Tezoyuca, a pueblo located south of Cuernavaca, stationed armed guards along the canals that irrigated its rice paddies in order to prevent surrounding villages from opening the hydrants and accessing water. It was these vigilantes who in 1926 carried out the massacre of Chiconcuac's agrarian leaders after the latter attempted to open the canal hydrants and free the passage of waters to their drying rice paddies. Tradition, a vivid collective memory, and a history of armed struggle bound these strong types of villages together. Most communities, however,

could not marshal the resources to pursue communal interests to the degree Anenecuilco, Santa María, Tlacotpec, and Tezoyuca could.

To be sure, each rural population sought to improve its cultural and material situations through engagement with the post-revolutionary state, but how and when they did so depended on internal and external pressures and prior armed mobilization. In the western municipal seats of Tetecala, Miacatlán, and Puente de Ixtla, villagers struggled against multiple external and internal forces that strained relations in these pueblos during the mid-1920s. The *hacendado* Emmanuel Amor, for instance, disputed the ownership of valuable ejidal plots in both Puente de Ixtla and Tetecala and made backroom deals with officials in the agrarian bureaucracy to support his case. *Ejidatarios* in both municipal seats lobbied Calles to intervene on their behalf and in both cases Calles responded by supporting the villagers. The thirty-two municipal seats, the largest communities in rural Morelos of several thousand inhabitants, often displayed characteristics of both cohesive and divided communities. These larger villages possessed more diverse populations, especially in terms of social class, as commercial interests and small-property holders resided in the municipal seats. Morelos's state governors were also more likely to commit electoral abuses and intervene in local political affairs in the municipalities than in smaller subject pueblos. In the southeastern municipal seat of Tepalcingo, for example, Governor Bustamante had close ties to the village cacique that drove *El Tallarin* to the hills. In sum, the political stakes were higher in the municipal seats and the class divisions deeper between the inhabitants.

Finally, dozens of other pueblos, some hamlets of not even 250 inhabitants such as Chiconcuac, located in western Morelos, and Tenango, found in the southeast, were weak, lacked coherency, and could suffer at the hands of hawkish neighbors. Lacking the shared history and solidarity of Anenecuilco and Santa María, many of these

communities had formed as settlements for the permanent workforce of a hacienda and later struggled to obtain sufficient lands and waters and were vulnerable to larger upstream pueblos with ancient water rights. The lack of resources made these weaker villages actively seek the intervention of government authorities as leverage against stronger and aggressive neighbors. Such was the case in Chiconcuac, where villagers lobbied the federal water junta to take actions against Tezoyuca's attempts to control access to region's irrigation waters. Likewise, hamlets in the highlands of northwestern Morelos such as Buena Vista del Monte struggled to access forest resources during the early 1920s, when militiamen from Santa Maria patrolled the woodlands and used violence to intimidate rival villages. These weaker communities wanted to become more pueblo-like in the sense of exerting greater control over nearby agricultural resources. The key, then, to understanding diversity among the pueblos depends on where and when the investigator looks. Village life was not static. A rural settlement could have varied experiences over the course of two decades.

### ***Avenues for Future Research***

New questions arise from this study's finding on the pueblos of post-revolutionary Morelos. First, family or genealogical histories of local elites in the region, particularly of village smallholders and merchants, would shed light on *caciquismo* and help to gauge the degree of change and continuity from the Porfiriato to 1940. Exactly which families survived the revolution with their small properties intact and how did they adapt to the post-revolutionary order?<sup>577</sup> Second, more knowledge of Mexico's rice production during the 1920s would allow a comparison of the *ejidos* in Morelos to private estates of

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<sup>577</sup> Crespo and Frey, "La diferenciación del campesinado," 304 hypothesize that these local elites benefitted from the agrarian reform of the 1920s, suggesting continuity from the Porfiriato to the post-revolutionary period. This dissertation, however, has presented evidence to show that village elites were on the defensive in the face of a mobilized peasantry and hostile to the agrarian reform.

Sonora and may help to inform our understanding of the national elite's agricultural philosophies. How many rice mills were in Mexico, when were they built, and who exactly controlled them? Third, additional research into the technical aspects of the hydraulic system in Morelos would further explain conflicts over irrigation waters during the period. Moreover, it is still not totally clear why the archives of the federal water juntas in Morelos thin out significantly after 1934. Had the federal government given up on its attempts to regulate the historic Cuautla and Yautepec Rivers, or does the missing documentation have to do with Cárdenas's reorganization of the agrarian bureaucracy in the mid-1930s? Fourth, investigation into village women's participation in the Partido Nacional Revolucionario during the 1930s would elucidate their roles in state formation, especially since women were allowed to vote in the PNR primaries two decades before they won the right to vote in constitutional elections. Finally, additional research on the Catholic Church in Morelos and the characteristics of pueblo religion will illuminate regional differences in the state's religious culture. Was local religion in the indigenous highlands distinct from that of the *mestizo* communities in the lowland hot country? Answers to all of these questions will enhance our understanding of the multiple behaviors displayed by *morelense* villages during the post-revolutionary period.

One thing, though, was certain about Morelos's experience in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution: the federal reforms embraced by the countryside aided the revival of the pueblos and made them more sovereign to the detriment of battered Porfirian elites. In return, on numerous occasions villagers came to the defense of a national regime that seemed that it had enemies everywhere except in the heartland of *zapatismo*. Of course, the return to peace was accompanied by many trials and tribulations, negotiations and renegotiations, and even occasional violence between pueblos and rebellion against the state; or, as Gruening put it on a visit to the region in 1925, "the wild



life of the guerilla does not conduce to settling down to communal cooperation.”<sup>578</sup> Once the villages emerged from the political turmoil of the mid-1920s and secured definitive titles to their *ejidos*, however, they in fact did settle down in their reconstructed communities, which now teemed with rice paddies, cornfields, orchards, and school gardens. Thus the pueblos were born anew.

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<sup>578</sup> Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, 163.

## Appendix A: Presidential Land Resolutions in Morelos, 1920-1940

Year	Number of resolutions	Surface granted in hectares
1920	0	0
1921	0	0
1922	12	15,969
1923	10	8,863
1924	18	10,078
1925	11	7,246
1926	28	23,492
1927	45	58,789
1928	18	24,193
1929	47	59,892
1930	0	0
1931	0	0
1932	0	0
1933	0	0
1934	0	0
1935	3	1,031
1936	47	29,309
1937	32	25,507
1938	17	12,843
1939	3	612
1940	1	707
Total	292	278,531

Source: Elizabeth Holt Büttner, "Evolución de las localidades en el Estado de Morelos según los Censos de Población, 1900-1950," *Anuario de Geografía* 2 (1962): 35.

## **Appendix B: Rice Price Index in Mexico, 1920-1940**

Year	Index
1920	70.2
1921	80.4
1922	88.9
1923	84.4
1924	91.8
1925	92.5
1926	99.5
1927	92.2
1928	83.4
1929	83.2
1930	65.6
1931	36.8
1932	32.3
1933	27.5
1934	35.8
1935	46.7
1936	45.9
1937	48.6
1938	44.6
1939	43.2
1940	51.9

Source: Montevideo-Oxford Latin American Economic History Data Base, "Rice Price Index," <http://moxlad.fcs.edu.uy/> (accessed 24 October 2014).

## Appendix C: Population of Morelos

Locality	1921	1930	1940
<b>AMACUZAC</b>	<b>1,702</b>	<b>2,031</b>	<b>2,504</b>
Amacuzac	655 V	507 V	897 V
Cajones	71 CU	165 CU	188 CN
Casahuatlán	15 CU	110 CU	64 CN
Cuahuixtla	68 CU	223 CU	105 RA
Huajintlán	401 P	427 P	671 P
Miahuatlán	69 CU	104 CU	162 CN
Playa, La	25 CU	33 CU	-
San Gabriel las Palmas	398 CN	462 CN	417 CN
<b>ATLATLAHUCAN</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,139</b>
Atlatlahucan	1,366 P	1,565 P	1,749 P
San Juan Texcalpan	123 P	174 P	215 P
San Miguel Tlaltetelco	114 P	143 CN	175 CN
<b>AXOCHIAPAN</b>	<b>2,600</b>	<b>5,212</b>	<b>6,134</b>
Ahuaxtla	10 R	54 R	45 R
Atlacahualoya	401 P	446 P	497 P
Axochiapan	1,337 V	2,590 V	3,198 V
Axochiapan	-	21 E	33 E
Cayehuacán	-	18 R	75 R
García	-	-	13 E
Quebrantadero	885 P	-	833 P
San Ignacio (Marcelino Rodríguez)	256 V	324 CN	323 CN
Santa Cruz Ahuaxtla (Joaquín Camaño)	82 R	123 R	140 R
Telixtac	540 P	622 P	775 P
Tlalayo	185 CN	205 CN	202 CN
<b>AYALA</b>	<b>4,161</b>	<b>5,081</b>	<b>8,531</b>
Abelardo L. Rodríguez	-	-	499 CA
Anenecuilco	348 P	414 P	894 P
Anonos, Los	14 R	-	-
Ayala	742 V	867 V	1,195 V
Huitzililla	127 P	165 P	580 P

Jaloxtoc	383 P	401 P	469 P
Moyotepec	171 RA	204 RA	339 RA
Rafael Merino	-	-	109 RA
Salitre, El	-	-	216 CN
San Antonio	116 B	145 B	-
San Juan Ahuehueyo	348 RA	543 R	527 RA
San Juan Chinameca	285 P	336 P	506 P
San Pedro Apatlaco	512 P	570 CN	854 CN
San Vicente de Juárez (Las Piedres)	189 CN	189 CN	318 CN
Santa Rita (El Vergel)	87 CN	106 CN	175 CN
Tecomalco	108 RA	87 RA	172 RA
Tenextepango	539 CN	791 CN	1,418 CN
Tlayecac	192 P	263 P	260 P
<b>COATLÁN DEL RÍO</b>	<b>1,696</b>	<b>2,180</b>	<b>3,159</b>
Apancingo	-	-	137 RA
Buenavista de Aldama	220 R	320 CN	405 CN
Chavarría	297 R	272 CN	451 CN
Coatlán del Río	742 P	732 P	983 P
Cocoyotla	338 H	423 CN	525 CN
Colonia Morelos	99 R	156 R	150 R
Michapa	-	173 R	250 R
Tlancingo	-	104 R	258 R
<b>CUAUTLA</b>	<b>6,769</b>	<b>10,468</b>	<b>18,066</b>
Amilcingo (Otilio Montaña)	68 P	155 P	228 P
Calderón	49 CN	199 CN	324 CN
Casasano	308 CN	385 CN	661 CN
Cuautla Morelos	4,462 CD	6,555 CD	6,431 CD
Cuautla Morelos	... E	-	-
Cuautlixco	671 P	986 P	1,322 P
Emiliano Zapata	-	-	3,228 CA
Francisco I. Madero	-	-	834 CA
Hospital, El	142 CN	254 CN	310 CN
Morelos	-	-	1,220 CA
Pablo Torres Burgos	-	-	240 CA
Puxtla	-	91 CN	240 CN
San José Ixcaptecpec	217 RA	748 CN	-
Santa Inés (Eusebio Jáuregui)	93 CN	125 CN	155 CN
Tetelcingo	758 P	970 P	1,313 P

<b>CUERNAVACA</b>	<b>12,893</b>	<b>15,102</b>	<b>25,666</b>
Acapantzingo	240 P	387 P	782 P
Ahuatepec	285 P	371 P	540 P
Alarcón	13 E	-	52 E
Amatitlán	192 P	26 E	776 P
Buenavista del Monte	-	D P	223 P
Cantarranas	154 B	241 B	450 B
Carolina	-	-	242 CO
Centenario	-	-	754 CO
Chamilpa	314 P	428 P	572 P
Chapultepec	167 P	234 P	658 P
Chipitlán	33 B	124 B	306 B
Cuernavaca	7,117 CD	8,554 CD	14,336 CD
Francisco Leyva	-	-	353 B
Gualupita	510 B	692 B	-
Jiquilpan	-	-	197 CO
Lomas de la Selva	-	-	579 CO
Ocoatepec	511 P	808 P	1,006 P
Pueblo Viejo	-	-	153 RA
San Antón (El Salto)	138 P	211 P	544 P
San Francisco (La Alameda)	224 B	395 B	753 B
San Pablo (Las Huertas)	63 B	119 B	198 B
Santa María Ahuacatitlán	436 P	471 P	856 P
Santo Cristo	120 B	103 B	-
Tetela del Monte	96 P	-	359 P
Tlaltenango	236 P	260 P	818 P
Vista Hermosa	-	-	9 CO
<b>EMILIANO ZAPATA</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,168</b>
Emiliano Zapata	861 P	1,332 P	1,630 P
Tepetzingo	126 RA	298 RA	581 RA
Tetecalita	-	209 P	310 P
Tezoyuca	123 RA	229 P	647 P
<b>HUITZILAC</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,085</b>	<b>2,354</b>
Coajomulco	207 P	289 P	426 P
Fierro del Toro	106 E	172 P	79 P
Huitzilac	479 P	1,007 P	797 P
Mancillo	-	-	D R

Tres Mariás (Tres Cumbres)	570 E	617 P	1,052 P
<b>JANTETELCO</b>	<b>2,672</b>	<b>2,915</b>	<b>3,079</b>
Amayuca	1,173 P	1,235 P	1,321 P
Chalcatzingo	251 P	331 P	420 P
Jantetelco	981 V	1,033 V	1,021 V
Tenango	267 H	316 H	317 H
<b>JIUTEPEC</b>	<b>1,961</b>	<b>3,226</b>	<b>2,353</b>
Atlacomulco	149 P	220 P	370 P
Calera, La	-	D CU	95 CU
Cerrado, El	-	D R	-
José G. Parres	-	-	82 CA
Jiutepec	407 V	671 V	880 V
Mango, El	-	17 E	D E
Progreso, El	-	-	410 CO
San Gaspar (Cliserio Alanís)	-	185 CN	130 CN
Soledad, La	-	D H	-
Soldead, La	-	8 CM	11 CM
Tejalpa	236 P	227 P	386 P
<b>JOJUTLA</b>	<b>5,173</b>	<b>6,422</b>	<b>9,200</b>
Chisco	165 CN	99 CU	235 CU
Emiliano Zapata	-	-	699 B
Higuerón, El	532 CN	594 CN	778 CN
Jicarero, El	25 CU	121 R	212 RA
Jojutla	2,984 CD	3,348 CD	4,451 CD
Jojutla	... E	-	-
Panchimalco	346 P	652 P	818 P
Río Seco	81 CN	98 CN	141 CN
San Rafael Chisco (Vicente Aranda)	-	122 CN	146 N
Tehuixtla	614 P	717 P	670 P
Tequesquitengo	105 CU	141 P	260 P
Tlatenchi	321 P	301 P	526 P
<b>JONACATEPEC</b>	<b>3,725</b>	<b>3,566</b>	<b>3,814</b>
Amacuitlapilco	353 P	401 P	408 P
Jonacatepec	2,190 CD	1,963 CD	2,152 CD
Santa Clara Montefalco	92 H	36 H	13 H
Tetelilla	744 P	834 P	922 P

Tlayca	346 CN	332 CN	319 CN
<b>MAZATEPEC</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>1,213</b>	<b>2,239</b>
Campo Alegre	-	D R	114 R
Cañon, El	-	-	64 R
Joyas, Las	-	-	D R
Mazatepec	1,113 CD	1,213 CD	1,454 CD
Pastora, La	-	-	D R
San Marcos Cuauchichinola	252 P	102 P	450 P
Santa Ana Cuauchichinola	-	D H	10 H
Santa Cruz Vista Alegre	51 H	61 H	147 H
<b>MIACATLÁN</b>	<b>4,388</b>	<b>5,272</b>	<b>6,393</b>
Coatetelco	1,545 P	2,164 P	2,857 P
Miacatlán	1,529 V	2,243 V	2,439 V
Palo Grande	22 VE	39 RA	-
Palpan	1,253 P	789 P	-
Rincón, El	-	-	9 R
Santa Rosa (La Mina)	-	37 M	37 M
Tlajotla	39 RA	D RA	59 RA
Vuelta del Monte	-	-	41 RA
<b>OCUITUCO</b>	<b>7,045</b>	<b>8,225</b>	<b>4,870</b>
Huecahuasco	276 P	308 P	360 P
Huejotengo	161 P	168 P	186 P
Huepalcalco	-	-	275 P
Jumiltepec	886 P	1,048 P	1,204 P
Metepec	539 P	563 P	661 P
Ocoxaltepec	332 P	369 P	198 P
Ocuituco	1,039 P	1,186 P	-
San Miguel Huepalcalco	263 P	268 P	-
<b>PUENTE DE IXTLA</b>	<b>4,703</b>	<b>6,958</b>	<b>8,578</b>
Ahuehuetzingo	178 P	264 P	345 P
Algodones, Los	38 CU	23 CU	-
Coco, El	109 CU	115 CU	65 CU
Estudiante, El	72 CU	87 CU	117 CU
Fundición, La	-	4 CU	-
Plutarco Elías Calles	-	-	814 B
Puente de Ixtla	1,916 V	2,545 V	2,470 V



Puente de Ixtla	... E	-	-
San José Vista Hermosa	394 CN	390 CN	455 CN
Tigre, La	-	61 R	247 R
Tilzapotla	... R	980 P	984 P
Xoxocotla	1,996 P	2,489 P	3,081 P
<b>TEMIXCO</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,420</b>
Acatlipa	-	98 RA	713 RA
Cuatepec	639 P	625 P	894 P
Pueblo Nuevo del Puente	-	-	112 EJ
Temixco	263 CN	941 CN	1,437 P
Tetlama	137 P	194 P	264 P
<b>TEPALCINGO</b>	<b>5,253</b>	<b>5,313</b>	<b>6,287</b>
Atotonilco	466 P	516 P	616 P
Huitchila	-	418 R	475 R
Huitchila	-	25 E	-
Huitzililla	129 CN	-	-
Ixtlilco	244 R	304 R	361 R
Limón, El	36 R	61 R	121 R
Matarratón	35 R	D R	-
Pastor	-	D E	29 E
Pitzotlán	106 R	139 R	153 R
Pochote de Mayo	77 R	44 R	-
San Miguel Ixtlilco	665 P	761 P	861 P
Sauces, Los	81 R	76 R	81 R
Tepalcingo	3,250 V	2,732 V	3,076 V
Tepehuaje, El	-	30 R	60 R
Zacapalco	164 R	232 R	429 R
<b>TEPOZTLÁN</b>	<b>3,836</b>	<b>4,714</b>	<b>6,034</b>
Amatlán	100 P	115 P	162 P
Ixcatepec	66 P	86 P	111 P
Parque, El	41 E	60 E	64 E
San Andrés de la Cal (La Calera)	183 P	205 P	317 P
San Juan Tlacotenco	300 P	402 P	499 P
Santa Catarina Zacatepec (Gabriel Mariaca)	567 P	767 P	991 P
Santiago Tepetlapa	149 P	153 P	449 P
Santo Domingo Ocotitlán	274 P	346 P	444 P

Tepoztlán	2,156 CD	2,580 V	3,230 V
<b>TETECALA</b>	<b>2,178</b>	<b>2,579</b>	<b>2,756</b>
Contlalco	-	R 62	162 R
Charco, El	-	D H	-
Francisco Sarabia	-	-	140 RA
Joyas, Las	-	D R	39 R
Pastora, La	-	D R	-
San Ignacio Acotpan	134 H	194 CN	225 CN
San Miguel Cuautla	135 P	236 P	-
Tetecala	1,106 CD	1,924 CD	1,892 CD
<b>TETELA DEL VOLCÁN</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,784</b>
Hueyapan	1,855 P	2,193 P	2,408 P
Tlalmimilulpan	325 P	377 P	432 P
Tetela del Volcán	1,261 P	1,582 P	1,770 P
Xochicalco	135 P	163 P	174 P
<b>TLALNEPANTLA</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>1,418</b>
Coatepec	12 V	17 V	189 V
Kilómetro 28	-	D CA	-
Nepanapa	-	D R	-
Órganos, Los	-	D R	-
Tlalnepantla Cuautenco	797 CD	972 CD	1,024 CD
Veinte de Noviembre	-	-	4 CO
Vegía, El	-	-	201 P
<b>TLALTIZAPÁN</b>	<b>3,390</b>	<b>4,404</b>	<b>7,675</b>
Acamilpa	246 CN	298 CN	502 CN
Amador Salazar	-	-	313 CN
Barranca Honda	-	-	402 P
Bonifacio García	-	111 P	533 P
Copales, Los	79 R	67 R	129 R
Estacas, Las	-	D R	-
Huatecalco	271 P	302 P	408 P
Jilguero	-	35 R	-
Porfirio Díaz	111 CO	-	-
Presa, La	-	D R	-
Pueblo Nuevo	180 P	193 P	322 P
San Miguel Treinta (Amador Salazar)	102 P	170 CN	779 CN

San Pablo Hidalgo	119 CO	209 CN	158 CN
San Rafael Zaragoza	132 CN	55 CN	165 CN
Sauces, Los	-	D R	-
Temilpa	73 CN	83 CN	299 CN
Temimilcingo	312 P	275 P	506 P
Ticumán	515 P	574 P	1,193 P
Tlaltizapán	... E	-	-
Tlaltizapán	798 V	1,433 V	1,966 V
Santa Rosa Treinta	452 CN	10 H	-
Xochimancas		D H	-
San Rafael Zaragoza	132 CN	-	165 CN

<b>TLAQUILTENANGO</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>7,474</b>	<b>5,685</b>
Ajuchitlán	86 CU	9 CU	114 CU
Calabazal	-	92 R	49 R
Chimalacatlán	35 R	139 R	230 R
Cuaxintlán	-	392 RA	267 RA
Elotes, Los	-	34 P	36 R
Era, La	-	84 R	94 R
Hornos, Los (Valle de Vázquez)	189 R	339 R	464 CN
Huautla	302 P	1,156 P	549 P
Huaxtla	54 R	74 R	24 R
Huixastla	-	-	52 R
Lorenzo Vázquez	-		277 RA
Mezquitera	-	85 R	47
Nexpa	178 R	216 R	178 R
Quilamula	68 R	216 CN	113 CN
Rancho Viejo	19 R	57 R	65 R
San José de Pala	-	118 R	138 R
Santa Cruz	-	203 RA	-
Santiopa	47 R	29 R	72 R
Tlaquilténango	1,731 V	2,219 V	2,518 V
Tlaquilténango	... E	-	-
Xicatlacotla	151 CN	284 CN	335 CN
Xochipala	107 CU	99 CU	63 CU
<b>TLAYACAPAN</b>	<b>3,157</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>2,421</b>
San Agustín Amatlipac	81 P	108 P	133 P
San Andrés Cuauhtempan	165 P	227 P	279 P

San José de los Laureles	154 P	216 P	266 P
Tlayacapan	1,154 V	1,567 V	1,743 V
<b>TOTOLAPAN</b>	<b>1,362</b>	<b>1,896</b>	<b>1,703</b>
Ahuatlán Asunción	77 P	78 P	101 P
Cascada, La	13 E	9 E	5 E
Nepopualco	238 P	308 P	353 P
Nicolás Zapata	-	-	23 CO
Retorta, La	-	D E	-
San José Buenavista	-	7 H	-
San Miguel Ahuatlán (El Fuerte)	40 P	53 P	60 P
San Nicolás del Monte (El Vegia)	110 P	159 P	-
San Sebastián (La Cañada)	42 P	65 P	58 P
Tepetlixpita	65 P	66 P	104 P
Totolapan	777 P	1,151 P	999 P
<b>XOCHITEPEC</b>	<b>3,693</b>	<b>4,096</b>	<b>4,364</b>
Alpuyeca	838 P	968 P	1,357 P
Atlacholoaya	421 P	401 P	619 P
Chiconcuac	200 CN	330 CN	410 CN
Jumiltepec	21 CM	-	-
Puente, El	307 RA	260 R	446 RA
Santiago Orozco	27 CA	-	-
Xochitepec	1,103 V	1,291 V	1,532 V
<b>YAUTEPEC</b>	<b>3,553</b>	<b>6,327</b>	<b>8,887</b>
Atlihuayan	3 P	-	-
Caracol	-	-	103 R
Cocoyoc	382 P	597 P	668 P
Itzamatitlán	168 P	220 P	221 P
Napolera, La	-	-	271 P
Oacalco	193 P	588 P	1,146 P
Oaxtepec	168 V	250 V	584 V
Ricardo Flores Magón	-	-	160 CA
San Carlos (Los Arcos)	34 P	252 P	411 P
Santa Catarina Tlayca (Ignacio Bastida)	68 P	105 P	128 P
Vicente Estrada Cajigal	-	-	657 CA
Yautepec	2,537 CD	4,315 CD	4,358 CD
Yautepec	... E	-	-

<b>YECAPIXTLA</b>	<b>4,293</b>	<b>5,110</b>	<b>5,890</b>
Achichipico	527 P	713 P	748 P
Aquiles Serdán	-	-	95 CA
Huesca, La	99 R	127 P	229 P
Limonos, Los	105 R	76 R	97 R
Mexquemeca	206 P	243 P	268 P
Pazulco	26 P	53 P	70 P
Reyes, Los	198 P	209 P	223 P
Tecajec	149 P	170 P	207 P
Texcala	239 P	326 P	391 P
Tlalmomulco	47 P	59 P	76 P
Xochitlán	590 P	669 P	808 P
Yecapixtla	1,779 V	2,113 V	2,205 V
Yecapixtla	8 E	-	35 E
Zahuatlán	320 P	352 P	438 P
<b>ZACATEPEC</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,254</b>
Galeana	408 CN	483 CN	628 CN
Tetelpa	448 P	604 P	709 P
Zacatepec	277 P	590 P	1,917 P
<b>ZACUALPAN</b>	<b>4,796</b>	<b>5,237</b>	<b>5,886</b>
Amilcingo	608 P	641 P	696 P
Huazulco	608 P	931 P	1,015 P
Popotlán	284 P	302 P	344 P
San Martín Temoac	1,178 P	1,360 P	1,563 P
Tlacotepec	772 P	885 P	1,055
Zacualpan de Amilpas	999 P	1,118 P	1,213 P
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103,440</b>	<b>132,068</b>	<b>182,711</b>

-	Locality does not appear in the source
...	Locality appears in the source but not population number
B	Barrio
CD	Ciudad
CO	Colonia
CA	Colonia Agrícola
CM	Campamento
CN	Congregación
D	Deshabitado

E	Estación
EJ	Ejido
H	Hacienda
M	Mina
P	Pueblo
R	Rancho
RA	Ranchería
V	Villa
VE	Venta

Localities in parenthesis indicate the official secularized name in the 1930s.

Sources: *Censo general de habitantes, Años 1921, 1930, 1940* (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación).

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Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas  
Particulares, Genovevo de la O  
Gobernación, Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (IPS)  
Comisión Nacional Agraria, Resoluciones Presidenciales  
Hemeroteca

AGA

Archivo General Agrario  
Dotación de Tierras Ejidales  
Restitución de Tierras Ejidales  
Ampliación de Ejidos  
Dotación y Acceso de Aguas

AHA

Archivo Histórico del Agua  
Aprovechamientos Superficiales  
Aguas Nacionales

AHSEP

Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Morelos  
Escuelas Primarias

FAPECFT

Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca  
Plutarco Elías Calles (PEC)

AHUNAM

Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
Aurelio Robles Acevedo (ARA)

BINAH

Biblioteca Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia  
Programa del Historia Oral (PHO)

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